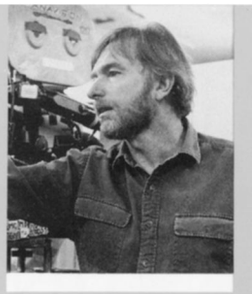
Film Quarterly



Volume 44
Number 2
Winter 1990–91

Peter Weir and New Age Humanism • Blacks in American Cinema • Contemporary Soviet Film • Sanders-Brahm *The Cook . . .* • *Chocolat* • Film Book Reviews

$4.50

0 74470 74075 9 04

A History Of Narrative Film

SECOND EDITION

by David A. Cook, *Emory University*

950 pages / 0-393-95553-2 / $29.95 paper

A "superb revision" in use at over 135 colleges and universities in just one semester*

"I love this book! David Cook combines astute historical analyses with perceptual textural readings. It is a joy to teach and a pleasure to read."

—Sandy Flitterman-Lewis
Rutgers University

"An excellent book—accurate, complete, interesting. I especially like the comprehensive glossary and bibliography."

—C. F. Greiner, *Schenectady County Community College*

"The expanded chapters on East European and Asian Cinema are especially welcome, and make it even better as a basic text."

—Graham Petrie
McMaster University

*"A superb revision of what was already a rich and wise account of film history. Cook's strengths are an encyclopedic range and passionate attention to the contexts, techniques, and technologies of cinema."

—Steven Kellman
University of Texas at San Antonio

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
500 Fifth Avenue New York, New York 10110

Film Quarterly

Volume 44
Number 2
Winter 1990-91

Editor:
Ernest Callenbach
Book Review Editor:
David Desser
Assistant to the Editor:
Bonnie Dehler
New York Editor:
William Johnson
Los Angeles Editor:
Michael Dempsey
Boston Editor:
Randall Conrad
London Editor:
Colin Young
Rome Editor:
Gideon Bachmann

Editorial Board
Leo Braudy
Andries Deinum
John Fell
Brian Henderson
Albert Johnson
Marsha Kinder
Linda Williams

Indexed in
Access
Art Index
Arts and Humanities Citation Index
Book Review Index
Film Literature Index
Humanities Index
Index to Critical Film Reviews
International Index to Film Periodicals
MLA Directory of Periodicals

Printed in USA
Type: Freedmen's Organization, Los Angeles
Printing: Malloy Lithographing

Gary Hentzi
Peter Weir and the Cinema of New Age Humanism **2**

Albert Johnson
Moods Indigo: A Long View **13**

Liudmilla M. Budiak
"We Cannot Live This Way":
Reflections on the State of Contemporary Soviet Film **28**

Peter Brunette
Helma Sanders-Brahm: A Conversation **34**

REVIEWS:

William F. Van Wert
The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover **42**

Steve Vineberg
The Fabulous Baker Boys **50**

Nikki Stiller
Chocolat **52**

BOOK REVIEWS:

Orson Welles: A Bio-Bibliography **56**
Directed by Vincente Minnelli **57**
Monsters and Mad Scientists **60**
Elia Kazan: A Life **61**
Love and Other Infectious Diseases **64**

Cover (top) Peter Weir directing *Green Card*; (bottom) *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*—see page 42.

Film Quarterly (ISSN 0015-1386) is published quarterly at the following subscription prices by the University of California Press, Berkeley, California 94720. Second class-postage paid at Berkeley, California, and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Film Quarterly, University of California Press, Berkeley, California 94720. $4.50 per copy, $16.00 per year for individuals; $34.00 per year for institutions. Subscribers outside U.S., add $5.00 for postage.

Domestic claims for nonreceipt of issues should be made within 90 days of the month of publication, overseas claims within 180 days. Overseas delivery is not guaranteed.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1994. ∞

Back issues subsequent to Volume 18 (1965-66) write to the University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720.

© 1990 by the Regents of the University of California.

Contributors in this issue

Peter Brunette is the author of *Roberto Rossellini* and co-author (with David Wills) of *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory*.

Liudmilla M. Budiak is Deputy Director of the All-Union Research Institute of Film Art in Moscow.

Gary Hentzi teaches at Baruch College of the City University of New York.

Albert Johnson, who is on our editorial board and has been associated with *Film Quarterly* since its first issue, teaches Afro-American Studies at Berkeley.

Bruce Kawin teaches at Boulder and dabbles in screenwriting; he is the author of the textbook *How Movies Work*.

Gregg Rickman teaches at San Francisco State University and wrote *To the High Castle*, a life of Philip K. Dick.

Jonathan Rosenbaum is the regular film critic for the *Chicago Reader*.

Nikki Stiller is a poet who lives in New York City.

Steve Vineberg is a widely published critic from Belmont, MA.

William F. Van Wert teaches at Temple and also writes fiction; he won the O. Henry Prize.

Gary Hentzi

Peter Weir and the Cinema of New Age Humanism

The Australian-born director Peter Weir is something of an anomaly. A professed loner who comes to Hollywood with an art house reputation, he is nevertheless thriving in the relent-

Weir directing *Dead Poets Society*

lessly commercial world of American cinema; and he is doing so not by using his technical skill to realize whatever project is thrown his way but by making films that return again and again to a relatively fixed set of concerns. The explanation can only be that Weir's concerns are also to an unusual degree the concerns of our culture, and as a result his films have some interesting things to tell us about ourselves at this moment in our history. Moreover, they offer a few curious subtleties, which have largely escaped the attention of reviewers.

Consider, for example, the director's persistent interest in homosexuality, a subject that is at least implicitly present in several of his major films. It becomes a key part of the mystery in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1976) when one of the school girls who are shortly to disappear without a trace raises eyebrows by calling her companion "a Botticellian Venus." As elsewhere in Weir's films, the exclusive, single-sex boarding school functions here as a kind of gay *topos*, alerting the viewer to the existence of possibilities beyond the immediately visible. Less overt but no less suggestive is the relationship between the young protagonist of *Gallipoli* (Mark Lee) and his friend (Mel Gibson), who travel together, join the army, and are finally separated by death in a bitter image of martyred youth and misplaced ideals, the camera lingering over the extreme physical beauty of the actors all the while. And in *The Year of Living Dangerously* Weir underlines the ambiguity of the relationship between the handsome foreign correspondent (again played by Mel Gibson) and his dwarfish photographer-informant by actually giving the latter role to a woman (Linda Hunt).

The most elaborate of these gestures comes, however, in the recent *Dead Poets Society*; and it is also perhaps the most interesting because of the extent to which the entire subject is submerged beneath the ostensible concerns of the narrative. Again we are in the world of an upper-class prep school, this time in fifties New England; again Weir has filled the screen with images of strikingly attractive young men; yet no mention is made of illicit love. Rather, the plot involves the rebellion of a group of straightlaced students against the rigid conformism of their milieu. Under the influence of an unconventional English teacher (Robin Williams), they slip out of their dorm rooms at night to read poetry, act in a play in defiance of parental injunction, and generally irritate their puritanical elders. This is, admittedly, rebellion on the order of demanding ice cream instead of porridge, as any number of reviewers gleefully pointed out; however, one may come to feel that something else is going on here besides an unexpected surge of interest in Shakespeare and Whitman. In fact, the plot of *Dead Poets Society* makes better sense as an array of veiled references to situations that could not be openly represented without endangering the film's profits. The meetings of the society, for example, are deliberately given an air of innocence, which is supported by the thin device of backdating the action some thirty years; nevertheless, the spectacle of a group of boys sneaking off to a cave at night to sit in a circle and read poetry inevitably suggests less elevated adolescent rituals. And while the nominal point at issue between the hero and his autocratic father is the young man's desire to act in a play (as a fairy!), the suggestion in these final scenes of a teenager coming out of the closet is so

strong that at least one reviewer was led to remark that the film would have been more intelligible had this in fact been its subject.[1]

At the same time, and notwithstanding these overtones, it is apparent that Weir is not simply offering a more decorous version of the kind of gay film-making represented by such notable recent efforts as *Looking For Langston* or the films of Derek Jarman. On the contrary, it would be closer to the point to say that the motif of hidden sexuality in his films is itself a figure for a larger and considerably more ambiguous set of issues to which he has returned again and again, though with less ponderous obtrusiveness in recent years. For it is not gayness as a way of life that interests him, nor is it the discrimination that homosexuals have traditionally suffered. Rather, it is the fact that "the love that dare not speak its name" is a taboo subject in so-called genteel society, and, as such, exists in near kinship with ideas of the sacred—another invisible and irrational force that cannot be accommodated within polite discourse. This is the theme that remains closest to Weir's heart; and even a film as traditional-looking as *Dead Poets Society* has its mystical moment when the charismatic (in all senses of the word) Mr. Keating draws an introverted student into an effort of spontaneous creativity by muscling him around in front of the class, as if exorcising some sullen teenage demon, until the boy finally delivers a stream of oracular gibberish.

If in his most recent films Weir has played down this aspect of his sensibility, it is nevertheless an overriding concern in his earlier ones. The most overt (but by no means the most successful) of these is *The Last Wave* (1978), which casts Richard Chamberlain as a well-to-do barrister hired through Legal Aid to defend a group of aborigines accused of murdering one of their compatriots. As he grows increasingly obsessed with the case, this erstwhile complacent yuppie finds himself becoming a believer in the ancient tribal myths and laws that he had thought to use merely as the basis of his defense; and the film appears to confirm his belief by having him emerge from his descent to the sacred place miraculously preserved beneath the city, only to be confronted with an enormous tidal wave, which apparently heralds the end of the world. In spite of its bombast, *The Last Wave* thus manages to give form to one of its director's favorite themes: the persistence of primitive forces beneath the surface of a repressively rationalized modern existence.[2]

The Last Wave

Even earlier, however, in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Weir had taken up this same subject by eschewing the imagery of native spiritualism and bogus apocalypse in favor of a more atmospheric approach. And with the seductive but ultimately unsatisfying narrative of the schoolgirls who vanish without explanation during an outing in the wilds, he produced something like a parable of his own enterprise as a director. Speaking of this period in his career, Weir has confirmed that his interest in religious philosophy and "spiritual inquiry" (the list of favorites is revealing—Jung, Carlos Casteneda, Immanuel Velikovsky) led to the creative effort that produced *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Last Wave*, "an effort that to me was always a failure, because I captured so little of what I got to know over that period."[3] In fact, the plot of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* rehearses just this sort of failure by refusing to venture an explanation of the enigma that it introduces, leaving the viewer either to reject the whole thing as suggestive nonsense or, if one shares the director's spiritual predilections, to accept it as necessarily reticent in the face of mysteries inaccessible to reason.

Weir's inability to capture on film the subterranean powers that so fascinate him points to a

Picnic at Hanging Rock

characteristic that his work shares with much of what has come to be called "New Age" thinking. "These are just things I got very interested in ten years ago and began to investigate in myself, and to think, read, and talk about," Weir has said of his mystical interests. "While I did so, I was least in touch with these things" (28). To speak of "these things," to try to communicate them to others, is to jeopardize one's own ability to get "in touch" with them. The insistence on individual experience is telling; for New Age thinking is religion for a world without a collective dimension, a form of spiritualism that is preoccupied with mysterious, transhistorical forces (except in those cases where the collective returns with a vengeance in the form of cult behavior). It should therefore come as no surprise that some of its most fervent adherents are well-educated urban dwellers, who feel their alienation most acutely and find in the imagery of inner strength and white-robed serenity precisely those elements that are absent from their lives. Although Weir's own imagery occasionally displays this same ersatz quality, it has rarely been so embarrassing as the commercial symbolism of the various New Age movements. Nevertheless, if a film like *Picnic at Hanging Rock* finally offers nothing more than a series of portentous gestures toward a central absence, it may be because this absence is more real to us than the mysteries for which it stands.

Along with its individualistic bias, the New Age sensibility is typically given to a thoroughgoing distrust of politics and political programs. Here is Shirley MacLaine on the ills of the modern world as they appeared to her in the late seventies, when she first became interested in reincarnation:

> Somewhere on the planet at all times there was war, violence, crime, oppression, dictatorship, starvation, genocide—a global spectacle of human deprivation and misery. Meanwhile, leaders worldwide continued to examine the problems solely in terms of the *problems themselves* without recognizing their true relationship to a larger and more universal necessity—the deep-seated need to achieve an enduringly peaceful state of mind on an individual basis, with all the broad implications that that would entail.[4]

This last phrase is characteristic, for it is by no means clear just what those broad implications might be. Some kind of mass spiritual tutoring program? At the very least, it is suggested that we have gotten it all backward, that our obsession with material questions has obscured the more important

spiritual ones, and that the best intentions of political programs must inevitably come to nought as a result. Similarly, Weir has expressed his dislike for politics ("I've never been a joiner") and emphasized his distance from the radicalism of his youth with the astonishing remark that, out of the cauldron of political activism in the sixties, "Perhaps all we're left with is some good music" (26).

As is so often the case with cultural developments in the postmodern era, Weir's fascination with spiritual matters bears some resemblance to aspects of an earlier historical moment: the occult enthusiasms of European modernism, most familiarly exemplified by Yeats's eccentric system-building. Speaking of this moment in *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams has observed that the two major intellectual developments to have come out of the dislocation and isolation of modern urban experience are revolutionary politics and modernist myth-making. With the passing of sixties radicalism, the former is not an option at the moment and, as we have seen, is repudiated along with politics in general by the proponents of New Age thinking. Williams's remarks on the latter development are, however, very much to the point; for they suggest that pop spiritualism is a way of making a virtue of necessity by turning the loss of the collective dimension in social life and the resulting emphasis on intensely subjective states of mind into "a condition of understanding and insight."[5] Thus, not only is spiritualism a kind of tonic for the feelings of anxiety and vulnerability that are inseparable from the loss of traditional communal structures, but the belief in archetypal presences and the practice of private rituals can themselves be understood as products of the frustrated desire for a sense of communal wholeness and purpose. It is as if our feelings of community had gone underground, to use a metaphor that is as dear to contemporary Marxist theory as it is to the director of *The Last Wave*;[6] and, indeed, this line of thought further explains the discreet homoeroticism of films like *Gallipoli* and *Dead Poets Society*, which, along with its connotations of concealment, also paradoxically assists in conveying a deliberately old-fashioned sense of fellowship and comradery.

To say "old-fashioned" is not merely to offer an impressionistic description. On the contrary, Weir is perfectly conscious of the historical element in his films, and one need only consider how many of them are set in the past to become aware of this. Moreover, even those that are not present a similar kind of fantasy situation. As an extreme example, one might take his first full-length feature, a horror parody entitled *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974), which tells the story of a small town in rural Australia whose inhabitants have taken to causing automobile accidents in order to break down the wrecked cars and sell the parts. Although Weir mainly plays this idea for laughs and presents the townspeople as Dickensian eccentrics (an old lady polishing a hubcap on her front porch, etc.), the basic scenario of a group of unsuspecting outsiders lured into an isolated town full of dangerously regressive inhabitants is a horror staple and dates back at least as far as Herschell Gordon Lewis's prototypical splatter film *Two Thousand Maniacs* (1964), in which bloodthirsty hillbillies carve up young couples for the annual barbecue. What is most interesting about this situation, however, is the way that it negotiates a perceived difference in social worlds, since the outsiders are inevitably representatives of a modern, individualistic culture, whereas the town is a fantasy version of the clannishness and ritualized integration that are characteristic of earlier social forms. The narrative comes to terms with this difference by, on the one hand, recognizing the power of cooperative labor (the activities of the townspeople are represented as a collective effort) and, on the other, placing it firmly at arm's length by emphasizing the perverseness of their habits. In addition, it is quite common to show the regressive society breaking down under the strain of its inhuman way of life, so that the structure of the narrative becomes one of purgation, with the fortunate survivors returning to their world at the end of the film, as if to reassure us that, in spite of its advantages, the older, communal social structure is even more subject to violence and entropy than our own.

Should this reading appear far-fetched in the case of so unpretentiously droll a concoction as *The Cars That Ate Paris*, one might point out how much its basic plot device resembles that of one of Weir's most successful films, *Witness* (1985). To be sure, there are differences, yet the differences merely serve to emphasize what remains understated in the earlier film. Thus, instead of a primitive community rapidly devolving into anarchy, *Witness* locates the anarchy and corruption in

Witness: The outsider and the community

modern urban life and contrasts it to the idyllic world of the Amish to which the protagonist (Harrison Ford) temporarily escapes. The film is, then, a kind of pastoral, intended to celebrate communal values that have become increasingly rare in American life since the pioneer days; and to underscore the point, Weir includes a barn-raising scene that self-consciously evokes the mythology of the old West right down to the striding, faux-Aaron Copland music that accompanies it. If the horror film scenario of *The Cars That Ate Paris* can only gesture darkly toward a memory of collective endeavor that it must immediately renounce, the plot of *Witness* moves that memory to center stage and earnestly idealizes it.

Still, Weir is hard-headed enough to recognize that the imaginary union that his film projects between urban street smarts and traditional rural values cannot be permanently realized, and *Witness* ends with Ford's detective-on-the-lam returning to Philadelphia in the knowledge that he could only remain a troubling disruption of the continuity of Amish life. Although he has succeeded for the moment in defeating the corruption around him, his affair with the young Amish woman Rachel (Kelly McGillis) cannot be continued without doing her irreparable harm. Such cultural awareness marks a noteworthy advance over Weir's more mystically inclined work, since it implicitly acknowledges that the vision of wholeness and serenity represented by Amish life is dependent upon social preconditions and cannot be achieved in any genuine sense by spiritual fiat. At the same time, the climactic scene in which Ford unexpectedly abandons his fight to the death with his ruthless boss presents a convincing resolution of the thriller narrative. Instead of the conventionally violent catharsis, the destructiveness is halted merely be being made visible to the assembled community in a kind of collective "bearing witness," thus preventing any simple dismissal of nonviolence as a pastoral fantasy.

Yet what are we to make of the fact that the film was harshly criticized by Amish advocacy groups for its alleged misrepresentation and exploitation of the Amish way of life? Writing in *Christian Century* magazine, Robert Hostetter observes of the affair between the detective, John Book, and the young widow: "Not the fact of the attraction, but the way the characters pursue it seems highly unlikely. Book probably would not have been per-

mitted to stay in the home of a single woman to begin with, and the 'body English' used by actress McGillis is too unreserved, too un-Amish, a 'come-on.' "[7] In fact, this romantic subplot is pure Hollywood, dictated by the conventions of a thousand similar tales of unlikely liaisons and included not with considerations of verisimilitude in mind but in the knowledge that the larger part of the film's audience expects to get some kind of stimulating erotic fantasy for its money. More generally, *Witness* exhibits a well-made quality that, among other things, identifies it as a product calculated to meet the various needs of its consumers. It is a visually splendid film and an admirably constructed one; there is hardly a shot that does not develop the narrative in some way; yet equally few scenes present more than a moment's ambiguity. As a result, it tends to make a strong initial impact and to benefit little from later viewings. These same qualities render it capable of pleasing both the "discerning" movie-goer, who evaluates it according to conventional aesthetic criteria, and a popular audience, which demands easily assimilable entertainment.

Such criticisms could, of course, be leveled against much commercial cinema; nevertheless, at least one of the film's more derivative moments—the episode in which Book, angered by the taunts of local bullies, defends his newfound neighbors in direct violation of Amish beliefs—presents a real problem. If *Witness* is to some extent a reworking of the themes of the traditional Western, then this is a version of the obligatory showdown scene, in which power and justice are fused in an act of righteous violence. Since the episode also precipitates Book's discovery by his enemies, it may be that Weir's revision was meant to question the wisdom of this combination. The problem is that the scene also retains the strong visceral appeal of its models, drawing the audience into an almost involuntary identification with the figure of the violent avenger. Thus, while it seems excessively severe to reject the film as exploitative, some of the reasons why it generated such large profits do lend credence to the accusation.[8]

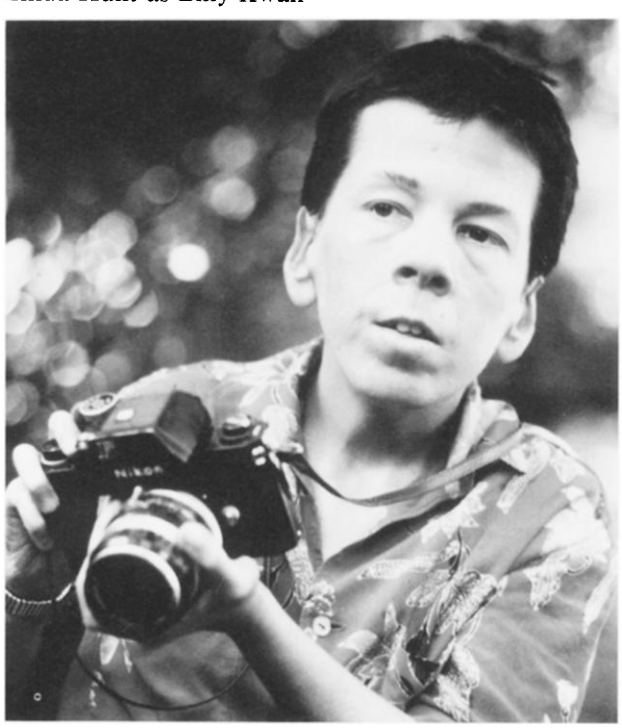
So far we have considered the trajectory of Weir's development as the restaging of a familiar kind of modernist engagement with the fragmentation and violence of twentieth-century life, to which he has responded with an exploration of sexual and spiritual forces, as well as the profoundly related idea of community. It is, however, equally important to look at the ways that this engagement has been affected by the environment of postmodern consumer capitalism; and the familiarity of the love story and the showdown scene in *Witness* provides a useful point of departure. For it is one of the most often-noted characteristics of postmodern culture that it recycles earlier cultural forms, serving them up afresh and in the process triggering a more complex response in the viewer than the material would at first glance seem to merit. An especially revealing example of this practice is *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1983), which also offers a romance in the grand Hollywood manner, this time set against the background of political turmoil in Sukarno's Indonesia. Although the film is perfectly enjoyable in its own right, it is difficult not to feel that much of the pleasure that we take in this story of love and adventure depends on our having seen many like it before, so that we know, for example, that after some initial halcyon days the lovers will be torn apart by the forces of history (which nevertheless only mirror their own doubts and hesitations) and then reunited after hairbreadth escapes at some place of departure for a better world (in this case, the airport). Yet this knowledge differs crucially from simple genre expectations, since it not only rests on our awareness of a set of conventions but also associates those conventions with a particular moment in our cultural history (World War II-era Hollywood), making the affirmation of a continuity between our own moment and the earlier one a significant part of our experience of the film. Moreover, this sense of continuity is reinforced by the casting of Mel Gibson and Sigourney Weaver, two actors whose ascendence in the eighties is part of a more general return to glamor and beauty in the film industry after the reign of unconventional-looking virtuosi (Hoffman, De Niro) over the previous decade.

In a variety of ways, then, *The Year of Living Dangerously* both reflects and caters to a kind of nostalgia that, while comparable to earlier longings for wholeness and spiritual presence, has assumed the historically unique form of a tendency to transform entire period styles into salable commodities, with little regard for historical differences. At the same time, it is not difficult to understand why Hollywood films of the World War II and Cold

The Year of Living Dangerously (all stills on page)

War eras should prove so attractive to the contemporary mind, for they are the signature of an age whose public discourse was marked by a reassuring degree of moral clarity in comparison to our own. Indeed, the extent to which recent films depict a universe of moral absolutes has become almost a measure of their intolerability, and Weir's revival of older Hollywood genres has the virtue of avoiding the mindless Manicheanism of Spielberg and Company. Nevertheless, his way of acknowledging complexity points to more subtle limitations.

Linda Hunt as Billy Kwan



To get a sense of these, one need only recall that although certain aspects of *The Year of Living Dangerously* do evoke the world of *Casablanca*, Weir's film is set in 1965 and deals with that quintessentially postmodern political situation, a Third World upheaval. And while the film presents a harsh picture of the poverty and military violence characteristic of such situations, it also registers a significant disjunction between the genre origins of its narrative and the historical moment of Third World nationalism. Unlike the moment of *Casablanca*, there is no stark choice to be made here

between neutrality and commitment—only the recognition that these events offer no place for the Western loner to insert himself as hero. Consequently, with no Nazis to fight and no Victor Laszlo to complicate his affections, the latter-day Bogart can only board the plane and get himself out of there before the violence reaches him. The effect of this renunciation of heroism on the film is to project an air of liberal trepidation: mass movements are brutal and capricious; the best we can do is to cherish the personal relationships that sustain us through the worst of times. Although these sentiments are by no means as disagreeable as, say, the cliches of Cold War paranoia, it is apparent that a cinema inspired by such convictions is, as it were, structurally incapable of saying anything interesting about a subject like Third World politics.

By contrast, the success of *Witness* can be understood as a partial solution of these difficulties. Weir's presentation of the Amish remains something of a fabrication; however, in their insistence on nonviolence he was able to find an emphasis more congenial to his own humanism than he could locate in Indonesian history, and their communal integrity offered an alternative to both the chaos and isolation of the modern world and its representative, the alienated Hollywood hero. With this success behind him, it is not surprising that in his next film he should have pursued his critique of heroic self-reliance, although few could have predicted that it would be such a resounding failure. The reasons for this debacle are nevertheless instructive and say much about the contradictions involved in trying to make serious films in contemporary Hollywood. At first glance, Paul Theroux's novel *The Mosquito Coast* must have seemed to offer the perfect vehicle for Weir's purpose. It tells the story of Allie Fox, a brilliant crank whose contempt for the commercialism and superficiality of modern America leads him to move his family to the South American jungle, where he attempts to build a utopian society virtually from scratch. With Harrison Ford again cast in the lead role, Weir directed this unlikely tale as a parable of individualism run amok, as Allie overextends and ultimately destroys himself, ending his life in a state of utter delusion.

A number of factors contributed to the film's failure. During its production, Weir expressed admiration for Paul Schrader's screenplay, yet much of the exposition is clumsy and tedious. Ford's character delivers one dyspeptic barrage after another, while the audience waits in vain for some sign of life from his vaguely hippyish family. Still, there is at least an equal possibility that the most debilitating problem here is thematic. The protagonist's disgust with modernity is reminiscent of the director's own; however, the egotism of his response is equally unacceptable, and unlike *Witness* the film offers no obvious alternative to these two extremes. Rather, it simply sets them against one another to play out their tragedy before the eyes of Allie's wife and children, whose characters have become radically attenuated in the transition to film. In the case of the wife (referred to only as "Mother"), the lack of a fully developed character is especially irritating, since it is to the most prominent female figure that one naturally looks for an alternative to Allie's

The Mosquito Coast

patriarchal excess. Instead, Weir engaged a fine actress, Helen Mirren, to play a role descended directly from the mother on *The Waltons*.

Yet it is not exactly correct to say that the film offers no alternative vision, for it seems that Weir meant to imply such an alternative in his own practice as director. In the McGilligan interview, he speaks interestingly of how he tried to efface his visual style from the *The Mosquito Coast*, consciously rejecting his characteristic misty panoramas and fata morgana imagery in favor of deliberately plainer sequences (30). This effort is in keeping with his conception of film-making as a craft, in opposition to "the European idea of . . . the artist-as-God" (29). Indeed, one of his models for his work is a Japanese master potter named Shiga, whom he has filmed, and whose conception of pottery is one of absolute selflessness. According to this craftsman's ethic, one risks the gods' disapproval for thinking about creating works of art; rather, one should simply concentrate on making objects that will answer a need in people's lives and leave the matter of inspiration to chance. What is interesting about Weir's adoption of this attitude, however, is his belief that it can be transferred intact into the realm of mass culture, even though it is essentially a preindividualistic philosophy which assumes a social world organized around the institutions of the village or tribe. This is not to suggest

that a traditional craft like pottery becomes devalued in a market economy, although it is true that the social function of the craftsman has been largely usurped by mass production. On the contrary, the danger is that our sense of the craftsman's wares as richly idiosyncratic but nevertheless functional additions to our lives will disappear in our awareness of their interchangeability with other, comparably valued items.

Such is the dilemma of the director in the contemporary film industry: efface yourself from your work, and it becomes a purer product than it would have been had a few eccentric or even exasperating vestiges of your ego remained. And such was the fate of *The Mosquito Coast*. Purged of Weir's cultivated visual sensibility, it became not the selfless piece of storytelling that he imagined but just another Hollywood movie with an unsalable theme, the styleless style that he took to be a mark of humility coming to bear an uncanny resemblance to the colorful, technically proficient visuals of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. After this mistake in judgment, it was almost predictable that his next film, *Dead Poets Society*, would not only be one of his most visually accomplished but also take as its themes some of the most traditional emphases of Western humanism—seize the day, find your own voice, make your life extraordinary—all of which are conveyed by a plot that echoes innumerable other tales of individual nonconformism and depends on one-dimensional authority figures to generate conflict.[9]

At this point it might seem that, for all its interest as a cultural case study, Weir's development finally represents a kind of cul-de-sac, its impulse toward community diverted into spiritualism and the facile celebration of humanist tradition. Still, there remains one film not yet discussed at length—his finest I believe—and the reasons for its success are no less significant than the problems with some of his others. *Gallipoli* was released in 1981, three years after *The Last Wave*. During that time, Weir had made a systematic study of the American and European cinema; and the result was an almost seamless film, a technical masterpiece that he has identified as both his favorite and his least personal movie. Yet although the film is free of mystical preoccupations and visual self-indulgence, it nevertheless succeeds in finding a form for some of Weir's major themes—his pacifism, his critique of modernity—by presenting as the exemplary event of modern history a slaughter that need not have happened. Beginning in rural Australia, the narrative moves toward the eponymous battle from a geographical and social distance, so that we come to feel the harshness and, ultimately, the meaninglessness of the war in comparison to the traditional way of life that the protagonist leaves behind. This initial glimpse of an older world thus comes to serve as the alternative to modern chaos that Weir's films have been unable to do without; and the fact that the main characters are typical inhabitants of that world, rather than alienated outsiders, prevents the reduction of historical events to a backdrop for personal conflict that occurs in *The Year of Living Dangerously*.

At the same time, *Gallipoli* is far from being a defense of tradition, for it is brutally clear about the ways that traditional ideals contributed to the disaster with which it ends. And it is through this irony that the film takes on a political dimension, which emerges spontaneously from the narrative and remains free of the didacticism that Weir so despises. The social world that we are shown in those early scenes is Australian; however, the question of Australian national identity is a vexed one, and to his credit Weir has been adamant in his rejection of the currently popular (and deeply nostalgic) tourist assemblage of koalas, crocodiles, and

Gallipoli

laid-back godo cheer. What *Gallipoli* emphasizes, on the other hand, is the extent to which Australian history is inseparable from the history of the British Empire and the self-destructive consequences of accepting the value system of a people for whom you are by definition second-class citizens. Chief among those values is, of course, the ideal of heroically self-abnegating service to king and country, perpetuated through the memory of great men and fostered by social rituals like the foot race at the beginning of the film or the reading of Kipling to the protagonist's younger siblings (how much more interesting and effective this brief, ironically critical reference to the stories of a previous era is than the admiring adoption of a similarly dated narrative genre in *The Year of Living Dangerously*!). Thus, if *The Mosquito Coast* offers a critique of the hero in retreat from society and reveals the pain that he causes to those around him, *Gallipoli* presents a far more damning illustration of the power of the heroic ideal to assist in the exploitation of an entire people and does so by revealing how this self-conception comes to shape the life and death of the protagonist.

Whether it will be possible for Weir to recapture the seemingly effortless fusion of individual drama and social conflict that he achieved in *Gallipoli* remains to be seen. However, one thing seems certain: to do so he will have to abandon the simple equation of politics with dogma to which he currently subscribes. The precedent in Western humanism for dismissing the realm of the political as hopelessly crude in comparison to the intricacy of individual relationships is a strong one, and it is no easy task to make movies that are both dramatically effective and politically astute, especially in the atmosphere of commercialism that defines the contemporary film industry. Yet to attempt the one without the other is to risk creating a cinema of straw villains and second-hand ideas, which inevitably communicates a politics of its own. By contrast, the achievement of *Gallipoli* rests on its ability to reveal the dramatic potential inherent in a genuinely social and political vision.

Notes

1. See David Denby, "The Boom-Boom Room," *New York* 12 June 1989: 78.
2. At approximately the same time, Weir made a short film for Australian television called *The Plumber*, which offers an even more offbeat treatment of the same theme. This time a crazed plumber methodically tears up the bathroom of an uptight anthropologist. Early in the film, it is suggested that there is a repressive element in the anthropologist's relationship with the tribal societies that she studies, and when the surface stability of her life is disrupted, she responds with deceit.
3. Pat McGilligan, "Under Weir: Peter Weir Interviewed By Pat McGilligan," *Film Comment* November/December 1986: 28. All statements by Peter Weir are from this interview; page numbers appear in the text.
4. Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a Limb* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 7.
5. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 246.
6. See Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), where politics is described as having been "driven underground by accumulated reification" in the modern era (280).
7. Robert Hostetter, "A Controversial 'Witness.' " *Christian Century* 10 April 1985: 342. All further references appear in the text.
8. This criticism originated with the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom (NCARF). One of the committee members, John A. Hostetler, who was born into an Amish community and is now a professor of Anthropology at Temple University, is himself responsible for a documentary film about the Amish, which was screened by Weir and his actors in preparation for *Witness*. When Hostetler objected to the Hollywood production for failing to respect Amish observance of the second commandment (against the making of graven images), Weir responded by calling him a hypocrite. Robert Hostetter, the author of the *Christian Century* article, acknowledged that any criticism of the film on this score must "take a consistent stance against all representations of [the Amish]." Nevertheless, he concludes that, although *Witness* depicts the Amish sympathetically, "the potential drama of violence versus nonviolence is avoided as much as it is engaged," and the Amish "are given little opportunity to test their beliefs" (342). Yet this is precisely what happens when at the climax of the film the boy Samuel chooses the bell over the gun, in which he has earlier shown some interest. While the charge of misrepresentation seems irrefutable, it is less easy to convict the film of thoughtless exploitation.
9. Nor is it surprising that a film which so carefully avoids political issues should be subject to neoconservative appropriation. George Will devoted an entire column to praising it for celebrating poetry in isolation from politics (even though no more than three or four lines of verse are quoted throughout the entire movie), and the decision to award it the Oscar for best screenplay over Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* was an even more visible political gesture. See George Will, "O Robin! My Captain!" *Newsweek* 3 July 1989: 74.

Albert Johnson

Moods Indigo: A Long View

Over the years, opportunities for African-American film-makers have grown to the point where an international audience has focused attention upon their works, accepting them wholeheartedly as definitive representations of black men and women in America. However, a long view of the portrayal of black Americans in our cinema indicates that, as James Baldwin once implied, not everyone in the interracial melting pot of America has any intention of being melted.

These reflections are part of a continuous concern regarding the odd ways in which the images of black people on the screen have absorbed some of the best and many of the worst aspects of contemporary American culture and its black sub-culture. The most exciting aspect of the present situation is that Hollywood producers have recognized the existence of black film directors, and at last, one can envision a time when paying attention to a director's color will no longer be necessary.

I

In each decade the American popular cinema rediscovers an ethnic image within the never-melted cauldron of American life. When the faces of two popular black comedians appeared on the respective covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines (Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy) one recognized the process—seeming to mark a quest for novelty, a new "hipness" that linked the perceptiveness of the aesthete and sophisticate with the streetwise humor of the common man. In the cinematic interpretation of black American life, this commercial success raises the hope, unrealized so far, that comedy will lead to important work in screen drama. But images of black Americans are still off-balance, treating only a limited range of experience and ignoring the lives of a vast part of America's black citizens.

The characters portrayed by Pryor and Murphy reveal an extraordinary range of dramatic talent (particularly with Pryor's work in *Blue Collar*), but each actor represents an odd mixture of rebel-against-society, the black man outrageously confronting social restrictions, and the vaudeville comic brought up to date.

Ironically, the pattern of vulgar language mixed with social criticism associated with both performers was made famous by the white hipster nightclub comedian Lenny Bruce. He, in turn, had been influenced by black comedian Redd Foxx, but Bruce shocked the white middle-class with his language and irreverence; he even dared to make fun of the Pope while using four-letter profanity.

The era of "free speech" on the college campuses of the 1960s made Lenny Bruce famous as a mordant jester who, through humor, castigated American middle-class values. As a white comedian using the word "nigger" as a joke, he also managed to shock blacks. But hipness was all, and American audiences, most of whom know nothing about those who live below the poverty line, appreciate humor associated with "les misérables."

It was Richard Pryor, a graduate of the Harlem school of rough humor (a style perfected by Foxx and Nipsey Russell at the Baby Grand Cafe), who snatched back from Lenny Bruce the language and attitudes of the black street hustler. There were levels of insanity in the humor of both Pryor and Bruce. Bruce's anguish was that of the disillusioned urban Jew wary of anti-Semitism. His monologues became more and more paranoid, thrashing angrily at the world around him, including every ethnic group. At times, he needed only to have donned

This is Part I of a two-part article, to be continued in our next issue.

burnt cork in order to become, momentarily, the pre-Watts, angry American black man.

Richard Pryor's urbanity and cold logic have not always been there in his comedy. His stand-up comic routines bear within them the same fine madness of Lenny Bruce, but the anger and frustration have subsided. Pryor's use of social criticism is often too blunt in its determination to be truthful about blacks. He knows that his white audiences accept his truths as being applicable to and accepted by black audiences as well. However, he also knows that black audiences will discern a double edge to his humor, sometimes accepting it, at other times rejecting its premises. In the film version of his nightclub routines, Pryor's ventures into whimsy are often superb (his impressions of Africa, for example), but the profanity, when dealing with "average" black American life, has begun to build a stereotyped image too easily imitated as a stylistic attitude by blacks—particularly black youth—and too easily misinterpreted by the public. As one watches Pryor, it is possible to see an incipient anger and restlessness in his nervous gestures and darting glances because he is creating a persona far-removed from himself—the fears and paranoia are only partly camouflaged by laughter.

It is this impression that makes his film comedies more successful when the stories demand little more than escapist farce. *Silver Streak*, *Stir Crazy*, *Critical Condition*, and *JoJo Dancer, Your Past Is Calling* represent those external comic aspects of the black comic hero, flippant and hilariously distraught. *Blue Collar* and *Some Sort of Hero* illustrate the possibility of merging Pryor's tense antagonisms toward American society's corruptions and conservatism into the realm of high drama and social criticism, on an interracial level.

The meteoric rise to box-office success by Eddie Murphy (a product of black suburbia, not the ghetto) in several films of dubious artistic merit arouses one's expectations about the possible development of a subtle black artist, using comedy as a weapon of both entertainment and social comment. In *48 Hours*, the streetwise convict is thrown into a discomfiting "buddy" situation with a big Nordic plainclothes detective, Nick Nolte, and physical violence between the two is used as a stage toward bonding and mutual respect. Murphy's portrait of smart-aleck bravado reaches its height in a famous episode showing his triumphant intimidation of the white patrons in a "redneck," urban-cowboy bar. It is beautifully played wish fulfillment, one assumes, for a large number of black spectators (underlining, ominously, a very real racism inherent in the American middle-class). Its element of total fantasy amuses the white audience. The entire sequence is a consummation devoutly to be wished, but in reality it would probably end in mayhem. Brash intimidations of white characters by a flippant, wisecracking young black man are also a source of humor in *Beverly Hills Cop, I and II*, but here the charm of Eddie Murphy's character verges on outrageousness beyond the borders of belief, despite the one-dimensional behavior of comic and villainous characters.

It is the facility of the humor that disturbs when one surveys the traditional use of black comedians in American films over the past 500 years. Most of our black comedians in recent years have been eventually reduced to comic strip characters—seen on Saturday kiddie shows on television, a testimony to the witlessness of the original roles. Only the profanity has been eliminated. The limitations of what the general public will accept have greatly reduced the subtlety of black American humor available in films and television. The wit of Dick Gregory and the late Godfrey Cambridge were tragic losses in terms of what might have evolved. The element of intellectual satire is lost in the films of Pryor and Murphy so far (imagine what might have been accomplished in Pryor's remake of the Italian comedy *The Seduction of Mimi* by Lina Wertmüller, where the adaptation was stripped of its socio-political overtones) and only *Blue Collar* exists to show that Pryor is capable of strong control of a serious role. As for Flip Wilson and Bill Cosby, the former's creation of Geraldine was a masterpiece of imagination which was permitted to fall away—a sharp vignette of the materialistic urban black girl who can only cling to her enthusiasms and childish impulses to get what she wants, seizing the wildest fantasies to justify her actions. Cosby's film ventures seek an image of black middle-class suburban experiences as a ground for humor, but television and live audience appearances absorbed his talents. On the screen, he was pushed into caricature; it was embarrassing to see him cavorting unrealistically in Poitier's vaudevillian comedies, the lamentable episode in *Califor-*

Harlem Nights: Eddie Murphy and Della Reese

nia Suite, and *Leonard: Part Six*.

The basic problem remains: Each of the outstanding black comedians best known throughout the world now—Pryor, Murphy, and Cosby—have been given an image that works and brings in financial fortunes for themselves and their film producers. There is only one missing factor, which is attention to the humor that lies in universal laughter, indigenous to timeless black American ways.

The core of black American humor is the street humor of fashion, language, and behavior that the great Bert Williams watched daily and worked into his act, something immediately recognizable, so that one laughs before the performer even speaks. It is the humor that Langston Hughes tried to capture in his Jesse Simple character, evolving out of Will Rogers's average man, having his say about current events and American politics. It is the humor that makes everyone survive and overcome the strife of living out one's life to the end. But this core has not been tapped since the early 1960s, in some of Dick Gregory's monologues, and Godfrey Cambridge's indignantly riotous observations. Somehow, these men brought black and white audiences closer because of a humanistic awareness of our country's racial imbalances.

There was not that innate sourness that lies behind the laughter in the Pryor and Murphy films, which lack the warmth of humanity—even in those tentative moments in *48 Hours* and *Beverly Hills Cop* where Murphy makes brief (very brief) gestures of camaraderie toward his white cohorts, or when in *The Toy* Pryor brings happiness and self-discovery to himself and the spoiled white child whose father employs him as a playmate-guardian. Perhaps, in the end, it is all a matter of taste. For those members of the black audience who may be dismissed (by the unseen marketing geniuses who plot the future Pryor or Murphy films) as being much too Brahminical about good taste, clean humor, and increased realism, one can only ask: If black Americans have to accept these comic fantasies as the mode for the 1990s, isn't it probable that they are capable of appreciating the talents more than the properties that merely exploit them?

There are times when, observing contemporary

American films, one has the sensation that he is beholding the work of someone in the early stages of dementia praecox. It is conceivable that this reaction might occur from time to time, but a film like *Harlem Nights*, a tremendous box-office success because of the presence of Eddie Murphy, gives one critical pause and inspires a closer look at the vagaries of American tastes in laughter. Perhaps it is tragic to become altogether resigned to the vanishing of the satire or screwball comedy that once reigned in American films, but the spectacle of *Harlem Nights* cannot be ignored. Here is a film that achieves the distinction of being the most profane in its usage of the English language since the invention of talking pictures. It is probable that Murphy never intended to create the most offensive portrait of black American modes and manners since *Check and Double Check* (1930)—which featured Amos 'n' Andy in blackface. As a successful comic performer, known for his irreverent imitations and boyish unpredictability on television (*Saturday Night Live*), Murphy has continued to be a highly profitable actor in *48 Hours*, two editions of *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Coming to America*, among other less worthy films. Suddenly, he became a foul-mouthed, insouciant Peck's Bad Boy of black America, and in *Raw*, a film documenting his one-man performance, one recognized the ominous signs of show-business fame moving relentlessly toward a state of hubris. An overweening self-satisfaction was visible in his smile, not quite as obvious before, and *Harlem Nights* clarifies his desire to be master-director, writer, producer, and performer, with devastating results.

Harlem Nights is a glamorous fable, expensively mounted, with a glitziness unknown to the real Harlem, past or present. It creates a world of Eddie Murphy's dream-fantasies of himself as a brown Adonis reigning over an underworld created in the style of Van Nest Polglase's RKO musicals. By casting Richard Pryor and Red Foxx as his cohorts, Murphy led one to expect a cornucopia of city-ghetto laughter exemplifying three generations of humor. But the result here is an unfulfilled promise, because Murphy, as the centerpiece, possesses neither the incisive, bitter wit of Pryor's work nor the earthy uproar of Foxx's ribald humor, and neither of these men are given a chance to display their individual gifts.

Critics, however, have given Murphy undue leeway. The present attitude of white critics toward black American directors is unstinting encouragement; an excessive amount of approbation given to certain films of this genre has aided their popular success, and the criticisms or reactions of the black public were, for the most part, ignored. Disconcertingly, whites mistakenly interpret the fantastical elements in these works as reality. The films also display an underlying racial bitterness that can make social criticism slide into unconscious bigotry. Since black as well as white Americans have always molded their personal behavior and philosophies to fit motion pictures (or television) icons, the role models for black Americans have become highly confusing. New stereotypes have come to life in black American films—images that, under the guise of popular entertainment, are as dangerous and insidious as the racist magazine illustrations of Octavus Roy Cohen.

It cannot be ignored that Eddie Murphy's cinematic education took place during the 1970s, the period of the "Black Exploitation" films, a genre characterized by a concentrated refinement of bad taste. The end of censorship encouraged a flood of entertaining though witless escapades of black superheroes and café-au-lait temptresses which enriched their producers. Murphy's *Harlem Nights* brings all of the characteristics of those films into the current upsurge of blacks in Hollywood filmmaking. As an example of the classic gangster film genre, *Harlem Nights* enlarges upon its superficialities: a nightclub where blacks and whites drink, dance, and gamble in evening dress; where Duke Ellington's music is heard; where gangsters hold conferences in well-appointed offices, and machine-gun fire sounds in the night. Murphy's version of 1918 Harlem after-hours joints is closer to a realistic look at *today's* in terms of mood and atmosphere than the so-called realism of his 1938 clubs. The latter image is particularly false because the Depression, even at its best, never boasted a place as elegant as Sugar Ray's in *Harlem Nights*. The glamor of a Small's Paradise in 1938 was different, less formal, more exciting; in the presence of women, beautiful or not, no one ever dared to say "shutduhfuckup" out loud—not even Red Foxx.

One may excuse Murphy's decision to create an environment closer to Coppola's *The Cotton Club*, but the depiction of black women in *Harlem Nights* is far from amusing. Even *Coffey*, *Sheba Baby*,

and *Cleopatra Jones* had some dignity in their violent heroines; here an unholy trio of actresses, Della Reese, Lela Rochon, and Jasmine Guy, are relegated to the lowest evocation of femmes fatales. Both Reese and Guy are deprived of their natural talents as lyric entertainers. As the obstreperous, elderly madam of Sugar Ray's coterie of high-priced courtesans, Della Reese has been asked to enact a larger-than-life termagant of the underworld: arrogant, asexual, and shouting obscenities to all around her. She is also called upon to engage in an alley fistfight with Murphy, the sort of situation usually reserved in the past for such white males as Fred Kohler or Victor McLaglen. Murphy's concept of humor is to transform this sort of hooligan into a type of black woman for whom violence is a major passion. This represents a clue to Murphy's approach to comedy: a reach for the facile, unsophisticated guffaw is less challenging than a subtle characterization. The question of artistic integrity on Ms. Reese's part reminds one of that moment in Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle* when a black actor refuses to play a negative stereotype, and another black actor immediately accepts the part. Thus: an actor "acts," no matter what seems to be the artistic excuse. Della Reese's image as a popular singer (it would have been plausible for her to sing in Sugar Ray's nightclub) was shattered by the raucous creature imagined and directed by Murphy. The two other feminine characters are equally stereotyped: Lela Rochon as "Sunshine," one of the madam's prize prostitutes, is a beauteous young woman whose major attribute in seduction (as described by Reese) is "pussy . . . so good if you threw it up in the air it would turn to sunshine!" Ms. Rochon plays her role broadly as a sultry vamp in feathers and a yellow gown, slinking in slow motion toward her prey. She and the equally attractive Jasmine Guy are extensions of the oversexed black siren, a tradition that reaches back to Nina Mae McKinney and Lena Horne in her *Cabin in the Sky* period. Guy, exquisitely bejeweled, befeathered, and befurred, is reminiscent of Von Sternberg's image of Dietrich à la Travis Banton—a Harlem vision of Shanghai Lily. In cinematic terms, these creatures are far removed from the realities of black women in their class in the 1930s, whose taste in styles leaned to Schiaparelli, Lelong, Hattie Carnegie, and Chanel.

Although there are few genuine laughs in the film that do not depend on epithets and vulgar retorts, one must admit that Arsenio Hall, another prominent new black comedian, manages to take over his cameo role (as a crybaby gangster seeking to avenge his brother) and bring some mirth into the action. Danny Aiello, an excellent actor who is rapidly becoming the resident white villain of black films, plays a crooked detective, but he also manages to be funny when he is sealed up in a bank vault.

The sky-blue silk background behind the titles of *Harlem Nights* led one to hope for a slick, amusing film, but somehow, this was not Eddie Murphy's forte. Surrounded as he is by the possibilities offered by the dream-world of commercial success, how could one expect him to know or *care* about Harlem? Pryor knows, Foxx knows, but they are given no chance to make a real contribution to the film. It is hoped that Eddie Murphy's comic talents will grow, now that his image as triumphant romantic hero has been indulged. If Eddie Murphy lets his intelligence prevail, then his future work will move upward toward truth, not downward to those timeworn cliches in which black Americans "intuitively" aped their betters (white) and strutted about in their finery. There are great voices from Harlem's past, from that still-remembered "renaissance," who cry out for better things from him; he has an opportunity to move to a higher level of interpreting black Americans—who live, after all, in a rich, complex, and vibrant black world right now.

II

There seems to be a small movement within Hollywood to present black actors in a variety of non-stereotyped roles. The absence of contemporary black box-office stars has always proven challenging and irksome to casting agents and producers. This was particularly true of dramatic roles for black actors, and after Howard Rollins's debut in Milos Forman's *Ragtime* (1980), in which he played the ragtime pianist turned terrorist, Coalhouse Walker, an effort was made to give him stardom in *A Soldier's Story* (1984), adapted by Charles Fuller from his own play, and excellently conceived, cast, and directed by Norman Jewison, who knows his way around black-white confrontations

Howard Rollins in *Ragtime*

from his work on *In the Heat of the Night*. The black captain who discovers racial prejudices among the black soldiers on an Army base was played by Rollins with the same emblematic stoicism he displayed in *Ragtime*, but the subtle element of color prejudice among black soldiers was diminished by diverging from the relative skin colors called for in the stage version, where the captain's skin color is the same as the victim's. Rollins's career has since been diverted mostly toward television. The tap-dancer, Gregory Hines, after his debut in Michael Wadleigh's horror allegory *Wolfen* (1983), was given a leading role in Francis Coppola's *The Cotton Club* (1984). His role as an expatriate dancer in the Soviet Union, in Taylor Hackford's *White Nights* (1985), represented a most unusual attempt to break stereotyping. In this film, Hines was also given a Russian wife, plus a happy ending —all definite breaks from the old censorship codes. However, the director could not foresee the unintentional hilarity caused when one beheld Hines performing a bad imitation of Sportin' Life in a touring production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* in Siberia! The improbabilities of the plot are cast aside when Hines and Mikhail Baryshnikov perform an oddly hesitant piece of Twyla Tharp choreography, so strange that the spectacle becomes fascinating. (Ironically, Baryshnikov is better at this push-come-to-shove movement than Hines, who is best served by a wildly energetic improvisation around a dance studio.) Later, Hines fit easily into the police-action drama, *Running Scared* (1986) opposite the white comedian, Billy Crystal, but his affable personality and dance genius was most successfully shown in Nick Castle Jr.'s film, *Tap* (1989), a homage to the art of black popular dance. Although it unfortunately had to cloak Gregory Hines with the cliched role of an ex-convict trying to go straight, the attention given to some of the great tap dancers of the past (Harold Nicholas, Sandman Sims, Nick Condos, Sammy Davis, Jr. etc.) was a move in the right lyric direction, once more reminding us that the musical genre, as far as cinema is concerned, has been woefully allowed to languish over the past three decades.

John Sayles's *The Brother From Another Planet* (1987) was an amusing fable about a black alien who lands in Manhattan and has a series of adventures in Harlem, while trying to elude some pursuing aliens. The premise of a black *E.T.* was wonderfully promising, but the opportunities to delve into hilarious aspects of Harlem attitudes, especially when the inarticulate alien spends time in a local bar, were feebly used, and the film cried out

A Soldier's Story

Gregory Hines in *The Cotton Club*

for a black humorist, some undiscovered satirist to give the film the bite it needed in dialogue and episodes. However, the major role, played in mime by Joe Morton, was exemplary.

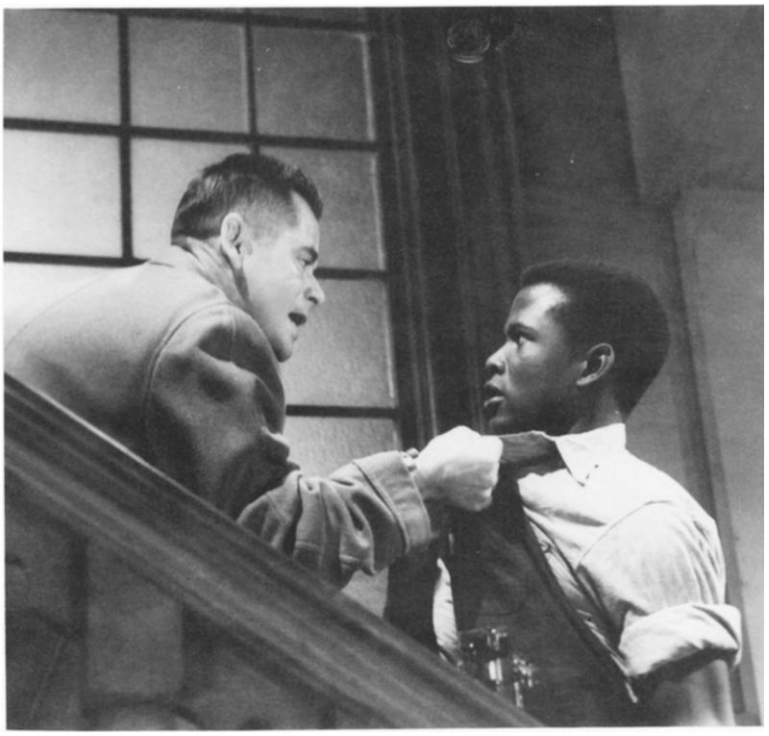
Danny Glover also displayed great versatility in *Places in the Heart* (1985) directed by Robert Benton, and he has ranged from a sympathetic black farmer in that film to the vengefully murderous detective in *Witness* (1986) by Peter Weir; he was a vigorous Western posse member in Lawrence Kasdan's *Silverado* (1986), and a genial detective companion to Mel Gibson in Richard Donner's *Lethal Weapon I and II* (1987, 1989). The subtle humanism of an interracial friendship is the major attribute in these films that had led to their popularity with all audiences. The "buddy" as black man seems to be a highly acceptable image, comfortable for audiences within the context of action films as well as in comedies. Since the black male image in cinema and television has been consistently linked to the underworld, it has been easy to accept the succession of interracial-buddy policemen, special agents, and government investigators, while tolerating the more prevalent images of drug dealers, gangsters, and pimps.

In Jerry Schatzberg's *Street Smart* (1987), black actor Morgan Freeman created one of the most terrifying portraits of an evil pimp ever seen in American film history, a character of deep psychosexual complexity, and the essential truthfulness of Freeman's interpretation led to his nomination for an Academy Award. Nonetheless, such powerful evocations of the lower depths of black urban society contribute to an imbalanced impression of black life in the minds of white spectators. The impact of violence as entertainment, coupled with the skillful acting of an artist like Morgan Freeman, distracts one from becoming aware of the absence of another kind of image, that of the ordinary black male. On the peak of whatever cinema-Parnassus exists in the world of Hollywood, there is so far no room for a black Everyman.

Film perspectives of teacher-student discipline have gradually moved from mild scoldings of shamefaced innocents to indisputably violent, physical confrontations. The age of Penrod is definitely dead, and two recent films are outstanding examples of the continuing genre of glamorized high-school deliquency brought to a new level of realism. The most striking features of the genre (since the 1960s) are the interracial component of the student population, and the new role of the black man as disciplinarian. Today, violence is taken for granted, and teenage-oriented films routinely exaggerate the dangers of highschool life (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, an important example of neorealist comedy, and *Class of '84*, an almost science-fiction use of adolescent grotesquerie and menace).

At any rate, Christopher Cain's *The Principal* (1988) powerfully dramatizes the problems that a

Places in the Heart



The evolution of school discipline (clockwise from top left): *The Devil Is a Sissy, Blackboard Jungle, Lean on Me, The Principal*

white educator, Latimer (James Belushi), confronts when he is assigned to interracial Brandel High as its new principal. With the assistance of a black security guard, Jake (Lou Gossett), he is forced to break the terror that one very ominous black student, Victor (Michael Wright) holds over the student body. Victor, through physical intimidation and drug sales, considers himself the ruler of the

school, and Latimer and Jake's fight together to eliminate Victor and his ruffians forms the basis of the action. The unruly students, who yell out profanities in assemblies; the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and drug abuse; the beatings and assaults upon teachers are all dramatized in a succession of brutally realistic sequences.

In John Avildsen's *Lean on Me* (1989), Morgan Freeman reenacts the experiences of the black principal, Joe Clark, who successfully rehabilitated Eastside High in Paterson, New Jersey, by using strict, unbending procedures in discipline for both students and faculty. Clark's autocratic behavior ("Discipline is not the enemy of enthusiasm!" he declares) leads him to expel all of the student layabouts and drug dealers, "the rotten apples," and to confront angry parents who resent his uncompromising demeanor. *Lean on Me* is one of the most powerful and well-acted films about interracial education, and Freeman's portrayal of the controversial Clark does not lack its dimensions of humane intuition and sentiment. Both this film and *The Principal* dramatize the efforts of Hollywood to move away from cliches. In the close alliance of themes in these films, the images of black and white principals, each attempting to deal with delinquents, are interchangeable—indeed both men move fearlessly into battle with an All-American baseball bat whenever necessary.

Near the end of the eighties three films offered new visions of the South, as it was long ago and as it was in recent decades. The most powerful film record of the civil rights violence of the sixties is still found in those television documentaries, compiled under the title *Eyes on the Prize*, so when, at long last Hollywood produced Alan Parker's *Mississippi Burning* (1988), one was very surprised and anticipative. The story of the FBI's initially reluctant investigation of the murder of three young civil rights workers was realistically presented; the film caught the atmosphere of truculent hostility against those who dared to disrupt the hierarchy of racial separation in Mississippi, and location shooting added authenticity to the film. Two fictitious FBI agents, Anderson (Gene Hackman) and Ward (Willem Dafoe) represented Southern complacence and Northern judiciousness, respectively. Their gradual recognition of the brutality and viciousness of the town's KKK organization was also the film's way

Mississippi Burning

of guiding spectators' attitudes about a turning point of American social history. There were some who criticized the film because of the heroic status of Anderson and Ward, and the implication that the FBI deserved total credit for taming the Southern bigots. Some critics even carped at the spectacle of FBI agents wearing striped shirts (apparently a breach of dress-code), but the overall effectiveness of *Mississippi Burning* cannot be denied. For the first time, an American film graphically showed the terrible injustices and sufferings endured by the black populations of the South, before and during the sixties. The characters of Anderson and Ward are superbly written and acted, especially in describing Anderson's mounting anger against his fellow Southerners as he watches their arrogant misuse of power and murderous indifference to the lives of black folk. The travesties of backwoods justice, the unforgettable faces of common people in the rural South applauding white supremacy, and finally, the discovery of the slain youths' bodies—these sequences remain indelibly in the memory, and Ward's presence among a crowd of black mourners makes him a sort of somber messiah, part of a scraggly landscape of fear.

The interactions of black and white Southerners have occasionally been viewed more gently in cinema, often in adaptations from theater productions, written with nostalgic affection by Southerners. A major film in this category was Fred Zinnemann's *The Member of the Wedding*, and

Driving Miss Daisy

Bruce Beresford's *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), based upon Alfred Uhry's play, is a distinguished addition to the genre. The film follows the growing friendship of an elderly Jewish widow and her black chauffeur. Daisy Werthan (Jessica Tandy) at first refuses to believe that she has grown too old to drive herself safely, and bitterly resents her son's decision to hire Hoke Colburn (Morgan Freeman) to drive her around. The film offers a touching duo of character studies, as each episode reveals the essential humanity behind the codes of racial segregation in the South of the forties and fifties. Daisy is the epitome of conservative white womanhood, gazing upon black people with mild suspicion when they behave with any individuality. She is not particularly receptive to change, so that her ultimate relaxed acceptance of Hoke as her "best friend" becomes a wry social comment about the intricate turns of racial understanding in a bigoted environment. The character of Hoke, too, is beyond stereotype. Morgan Freeman (a Southerner by birth) knows the wisdom of an older generation of Southern black men, those who sense, with patience, the superficial courtesies of whites who think that they understand all minorities by intuition. After decades of enforced social detachment, Hoke's respectful attitudes to Miss Daisy indicate that he knows her type in many guises; his loyalty disguises his subtle control of the situation and his ability to sway Miss Daisy's opinions. Hoke's sense of humor also supports his imperturbable tolerance of Miss Daisy's hauteur. (When her son is pleasantly surprised that she has accepted Hoke as a chauffeur, Hoke replies "It only took six days. Same time it took the Lord to make the world.") The anti-Semitic bombing of the temple that Miss Daisy has always attended, and Hoke's calm description of a lynching, are incisive moments that remind the spectator of the miracle of the alliance between these two people. The final sequence, with Hoke's gesture of deeply felt solicitude toward the aged Miss Daisy, is so full of human kindness and generosity that it touches spectators more than one can describe.

The third unexpected film that glanced toward the past is *Glory* (1989), an epic retelling of the exploits of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, the first black fighting unit recruited in the North during the Civil War. This innovative film about an unknown part of American history has now opened cinematic doors to the achievements of black people in the last century, the unsung pioneers who fought for equal status after the abolition of slavery. The powerful effect of *Glory* lies not only in the narrative but in the extraordinary verisimilitude achieved in the photography (Freddie Francis) and production design (Norman Garwood). Edward Zwick's direction is exemplary, revealing a surprising range of vision, since one knew his film work from only one previous feature (*About Last Night*, a contemporary love story). The 54th was commanded by a young white colonel, Robert Gould Shaw (Matthew Broderick, in his best dramatic role so far) but the film's focus is primarily upon the black recruits, who zealously sought to prove their worthiness as soldiers. These men wanted respect as well as freedom, and several individuals in the ranks are singled out for indelible characterizations. As Trip, a runaway slave who joins the regiment, Denzel Washington etches a very strong portrayal. Trip is determined to fight Confederate soldiers, who rep-

resent all the indignities he has suffered at Southern hands. In one of the film's most wrenching moments, Trip's insubordination leads to a public flogging, authorized by young Colonel Shaw. As the whip strikes, Washington's face, in close-up, reflects the shifting expressions of hatred, indignation, and shame, with a superhuman effort to control one falling tear. Washington's performance in *Glory* rises to the pinnacle of stardom, and it has been noticed that his other films (*The Mighty Quinn* and *For Queen and Country*) have prepared him to assume the black leading-man status comfortably held for so long by Sidney Poitier. Morgan Freeman also creates an authoritative figure as Rawlins, a former gravedigger who is eventually promoted by Shaw to the rank of Sergeant-Major. The antagonism shown by white soldiers in the Union Army adds an additional irony when one remembers that the US armed forces remained segregated throughout both World Wars. The bravery of the black regiment is shown with horrific realism as they march directly into cannon barrages, in suicidal charges on a Confederate fort.

Glory succeeds in its poignant demonstration that the Civil War period is full of richly dramatic material on the interplay of black and white Americans. The relationship between Colonel Shaw and Thomas Searles (Andre Braugher), a black childhood friend raised and educated as a freedman, is intricately outlined. Thomas has difficulty in readjusting to an association with ignorant fellow blacks when he joins the regiment, and is disturbed by the diffidence shown toward him by Shaw because of military protocol. *Glory* is a noble film, and its poetic explorations of racial harmony remain vivid, with tragic sequences that bring to life those times when black soldiers convinced their white comrades that after all the battles, victorious or not, the eternity of death has no color bar.

III

Great expectations are entertained for the future success of black American film directors, almost all of them working as independents and hoping to become discovered by the major Hollywood producers or several newly assertive distribution companies. Outside of the mainstream, the expatriate Ethiopian director, Haile Gerima, became associated with the film department at Howard University, a major black institution in Washington, D.C.; he was known already for his Ethiopian feature, *Harvest 3000 Years* (1975). Gerima's first American feature, *Bush Mama* (1976) explored a black single mother's futile efforts to protect her young daughter from the dangers of a racist atmosphere

Glory

Bush Mama

in the Los Angeles ghetto of Watts. The structure of the film is Godardian, full of swiftly edited newsreel footage of riots and a gritty black-and-white style of photography. The political protest is inherent in the furnishings of the heroine's apartment, with posters of Malcolm X and Dr. King, and the trappings of 1960s Pan Africanism. The brutal, unprovoked sexual assault on the daughter by a white policeman and his subsequent murder by the mother provide a brutal climax to the images of ghetto futility and oppression that Gerima continuously uses as symbols of black urban life. After completing a documentary, protesting the unfair trial of political dissidents, Gerima made an ambitious, angry study of a disillusioned black veteran of the Vietnam War, entitled *Ashes and Embers* (1984). The incipient rage within the man is counterpointed by the bucolic sentiments and remonstrative advice of his elderly black grandmother, causing some confusion of Gerima's overall theme, but when the veteran furiously admonishes his girlfriend or expresses his frustrations about failing to break through anonymity as a potential actor, the film comes alive with an intensity which is lacking throughout the work.

Before the advent of Spike Lee, the New York scene for black film-makers has been chiefly represented by the documentary works of St. Clair Bourne, William Greaves, and Warrington Hudlin. Hudlin, one of the organizers of the Black Film Foundation, caught the attention of the public during the 1970s with his *Street Corner Stories*, capturing, in a neorealist manner, the sights and language of a black neighborhood with its often elusive moods. He recently produced *House Party* (1989), directed by his brother Reginald.

Woodie King, Jr., in his feature film *The Long Night* (1977) dramatized a black, unemployed Vietnam veteran through the eyes of his young son, giving glimpses of black urban life that linger in the memory, but these are subjugated to the melodramatic themes of the plot. Robert Gardner's film about the friendship between two eleven-year-olds in a Harlem school, *Clarence and Angel* (1979) is a compassionate work, and the best piece of neorealism about this particular milieu. The themes of illiteracy among blacks, the indifference of school teachers toward problem children, and the self-reliance of the Puerto Rican child Angel are impressively woven into a city fable, and *Clarence and Angel* was an extraordinary success with audiences everywhere.

Clarence and Angel

The work of Stan Lathan represents the possibilities open to black directors, who, like Michael Schultz, are willing to patiently work through the commercial demands of television shows and pop-music projects in order to create something personal regarding black American life onscreen. Lathan's film comedy, *Amazing Grace*, with the comedienne, Jackie Mabley, was an acceptable comedy, but it was his film adaptation of James Baldwin's novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1984) (presented initially on television) that indicated his talent for strong, dramatic material. The semi-autobiographi-

cal film portrayed the adolescence of a Harlem youth, John Grimes (James Bond III), whose stepfather (Paul Winfield) is the deacon and preacher of a little religious congregation in Harlem. The conflict between the boy's desire to become a writer and the stepfather's frustration regarding his licentious past and hopes for spiritual redemption lie at the heart of the film. Lathan's control of his actors is extraordinary, and despite a limited budget the film manages to convey unforgettably the daily struggle within the black ghetto for young people to forge a destiny of their own. The film also dramatizes, in flashback vignettes, the casual racism and cruelty in Southern towns during the early 1900s, in a much more truthful manner than in *The Color Purple*. In Lathan's film, pathos continually overcomes any suggestion of sentimentality. Lathan's most recent film was a musical, *Beat Street* (1984) released by a Hollywood studio and financed by Harry Belafonte. It offered a gymnastic new type of street dancing created by Puerto Rican street-toughs in the Bronx in 1982. An enterprising young white director, Charlie Ahearn, had also made an independent feature, *Wild Style* (1983), which linked the squalor and rubble of the South Bronx with the phoenix-like rise of both graffitti art and break-dancing, beginning a sociological mythology about these phenomena as representing a folk culture of the underprivileged.

By 1984, the news media had seized upon the cult of break-dancing and Cannon Films' *Breakin'* and Stan Lathan's *Beat Street* were major excitements of the Cannes film festival. In Lathan's depiction of the crumbling atmosphere of black and Puerto Rican life, the streets are more romantic than mean. The film's protagonists are two young black brothers, Kenny (Guy Davis) and Lee (Robert Taylor), ambitious to find success as a disc jockey and break-dancer, respectively. Apparently, neither of them is involved with education, although Lee is obviously a minor. One of their best friends is Ramon (Jon Chardiet) a young Puerto Rican, jobless and married, but also obsessed by an urge to paint colorful graffiti on subway cars. According to the cinematic gospel of street life, graffiti is the emblem of a new artistic modernism: these secret, nocturnal painters, the scourge of the New York transit authorities, are "Les Fauves" of the lower classes.

The dancing in *Beat Street* is its chief marvel, but one cannot overlook its images of black American life, attempting to endow miserable surroundings with a slum-pastorale aura. Behind the carefree lyricism of the dances are the drowned-out cries of poverty and hunger. There is an uneasy imbalance here because the male characters are too unrealistic in a documentary setting: here again are black youths dreaming in an irrational frame of reference, all visceral and overtly hi-de-ho, and glossed over with the contemporary flash and visual glamor of artificial chic.

Beat Street

A final irony is that Sidney Poitier's last entry into the youth-dance genre, *Fast Forward* (1985) came close to reaching the high standards of the traditional Hollywood musical; within the framework of its cliches, it was intelligent—but unsuccessful at the box office. *Fast Forward* depicts eight fledgling dancers from the suburbs of Sandusky, Ohio; convinced of their talents, they journey to New York to participate in a dance competition called "The Shootout." This interracial octet's dances are obviously inspired by video shows and aerobic exercises, as well as the quicksilver movements of Michael Jackson, and eventually they confront a rival dance-group. The sequence in which the protagonists challenge their adversaries in a discotheque is a major achievement of modern popular dance in recent cinema and should be considered for any time-capsule to illustrate modes of the eighties. Another distinctive characteristic of *Fast Forward* is the wholesome image given to the eight dancers; not only are they interracially at ease, but they are not drug addicts, they are intel-

Fast Forward

ligent and persevering, and their sexuality is under control. The two males in the group, one white, the other black, are both handsome, strong and self-assertive, although the white youth is permitted to have the only love interest (with a pretty socialite). However, Don Franklin as Michael, the black dancer, creates a powerful image of determination and lyrical self-confidence.

One of the most-discussed recent American films about rural blacks was Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple* (1985). Surprisingly, most prominent white critics dismissed the film altogether as a commercial betrayal of Alice Walker's novel, which was considered by many to be a feminist work, describing the survival of black women despite generations of physical and mental abuse by black males. Spielberg's romantic approach to Walker's novel indicated his penchant for film as entertainment; in the popular sense, the film *pleases* audiences (white and black) with its formula of the victim-heroine, triumphant and enduring at the conclusion of the story. Spielberg clearly never had any intention of creating a realistic view of the South during its period of worst social injustice against blacks (1909–1937). *The Color Purple* is firmly within the genre of romantic melodrama, and Spielberg's talent as storyteller, Dickensian perhaps, is always brilliantly capable of touching the emotions of audiences at specific moments.

The sufferings of the heroine, Celie (Whoopi Goldberg, in her only purely dramatic role so far), are most poignantly and memorably depicted in two sequences: the physical separation by force of Celie and her sister, Nettie (Akosia Bosua), and the discovery of Nettie's long-hidden letters by Celie and the blues singer Shug (Margaret Avery). It is impossible to resist the emotional effectiveness of these moments, which lie well within the classical film traditions of melodrama and nostalgic sentimentality. As for the rest of *The Color Purple*, there are a number of flaws, most of them due to an underestimation of the general audience's intelligence, and an almost insensitive awareness of black spectators' sensibilities. The interiors of Celie's home are too clean, the clothing too proper, and the surrounding fields too flowery; the musical score by Quincy Jones is surprisingly (if not unbearably) Coplandesque, while his acceptance of a

predictable, inauthentic jazz atmosphere for Shug is inexcusable. The sequence in which Shug leads a crowd of gin-mill fans along a country road to join a gospel-singing congregation is outrageously false, and obviously aimed toward an audience of cretins. The sense of period is lost altogether, and the mulatto girl Squeak (played in bizarre fashion by Rae Dawn Chong) is totally inexplicable. The few white characters are presented as mean caricatures, and the performance of Oprah Winfrey (a talented television hostess here making her screen debut) is completely overstated and played for either laughs or false pathos: the inherent tragedy of her character is not developed toward social comment, as if her degradation should not cloud the essential sunniness of the dénouement—Celie's reunion with her lost African children and her sister, Nettie, and the sudden moral regeneration of Mister. The stormy critical reaction to *The Color Purple* was essentially a manifestation of the disappointment felt by those who sensed that the novel's artistic possibilities had been betrayed, and speculations about the wisdom of Spielberg's decision to direct this property led to much controversy. Whether a black director would have improved upon the story is purely conjectural. Now that the storms of opinion have subsided, *The Color Purple* seems to have settled into a quiet niche of black cinema history as a sort of folk-pastorale, with images and episodes that often appear falsely bright.

[To be concluded in our next issue.]

The Color Purple

The most thorough investigation of the genesis and development of American film ever published...

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN CINEMA

CHARLES HARPOLE, General Editor

Explore the business and entertainment world of the American cinema from the 1800's through the silent film era in the first three titles of this new 10-volume series.

Volume 1

The Emergence of Cinema

The American Screen to 1907

By CHARLES MUSSER

#0684184133 • $60 • appr. 650 pgs., illus.

Volume 2

The Transformation of Cinema

1908–1915

By EILEEN BOWSER

#0684184141 • $60 • appr. 450 pgs., illus.

Volume 3

An Evening's Entertainment

The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928

By RICHARD KOSZARSKI

#068418415X • $60 • appr. 475 pgs., illus.

All volumes illustrated with hundreds of rare photographs.

Available exclusively from

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Dept. HC, Library Marketing, 866 Third Ave., NY, NY 10022

TO ORDER TOLL-FREE, CALL: 1-800-323-7445

All orders from individuals must be prepaid by check, m.o. or major credit card. Prices do not include shipping/handling charge of $3 additional per volume.

Inter-Girl

Liudmila M. Budiak

"We Cannot Live

Reflections on the Soviet Film

Paraphrasing the well-known opening of Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*, "The affairs of the Oblonsky household were in a muddle," one could say that "The affairs of the Soviet cinema had become confused," which, for that matter, remains true of Soviet life in general. The Soviet people seem to be located in a zone of increasing seismic danger: one tremor follows another; demolished and dilapidated buildings can be found everywhere; everyone's nerves are on edge; fear seizes their souls; and no one knows from one minute to the next what might happen. Needless to say, such a state is most unpleasant, exacerbated by the empty store shelves, the worthlessness of the ruble, and the national conflicts which flare up like fires in a drought-afflicted year.

As for the cinema, it reflects seething passions, serious economic difficulties, euphoria resulting from swift democratic reform, inexorable stratification of society, and heightened insecurities regarding the future.

From abroad, the situation regarding both the country as a whole and the cinema in particular might not appear so gloomy and hopeless. People tend, characteristically, to exaggerate their suffering in a desire to move more rapidly from a hellish to a heavenly state, and this tendency has become pronounced in the Soviet Union. Soviet critics animadvert on the sorry state of contemporary Soviet films, while at the same time a cornucopia of awards are bestowed upon them. For instance, Gleb Panfilov's *Mother*, based on motifs from Gorky's novel, was well received at both the Venice and Montreal film festivals. At Cannes not only was the director Pavel Lungin awarded the Jury Prize for his film *Taxi Blues*, a bitter reflection on bankrupt men in their forties, but also Vitalli Kanevski's *Golden Chambers* was received favorably at its successful premiere. At Karlov Vary the scenarist and director Andrei Smrinov received the award for best male actor in another recent film premiere, of Sergei Iurskii's *Chernov*. One-third of the 44 films shown at Locarno in the summer of 1990 were Soviet ones—among them, S. Proskurnyi's *Accidental Waltz*, which received the Golden Leopard Award. If one takes into account the awards bestowed in West Berlin, Oberhausen, Tokyo, and Cairo, then indeed one ends up with a host of successful entries at the most prominent international film festivals.

Yet this has occurred at the very same time that critics have unanimously declared, firstly, an unprecedented crisis in Soviet cinema; secondly, a marked decline not only in its prestige, but also in the level of mass production; and, thirdly, the dramatic fate of the *auteur* film, which in the eyes of the worldwide film community is associated with such names as Tarkovskii, Paradzhanov, and Sokurov.

This Way"
State of Contemporary

Audiences express their opinion of the Soviet cinema through their feet; that is to say, they are simply not going to see Soviet films, even at a time when film-makers are trying to captivate them by means of piquant love scenes, bulging muscles, and intricate, mysterious plots. Given the situation, film theaters are tending to stake a claim on American, Indian, and French films, which as a rule tend not to be of the highest quality.

Nevertheless, there have been exceptions. Recently, Petr Todorovskii's beautifully presented film *Inter-Girl* broke all box-office records, far surpassing imported films. The indisputable success of the picture—among the young and the old, the well and poorly educated, men and women, city dwellers and townfolk—was evidently thought out well in advance. Especially noteworthy is the film's construction according to old, familiar stereotypes and a mythology that still governs a significant number of intellects. More importantly, however, the film offered an unprecedented glimpse into the clandestine world of Soviet prostitutes: both those women in the minor sectors of the business and those who work exclusively with foreigners for dollars, pounds, and marks—thereby replenishing the country's supply of hard currency. The film not only boldly violated a taboo, a closed off "zone" as the Soviets often refer to the territories where military bases and other heavily guarded establishments are located, but also dealt with issues and sectors of society which until recently were not spoken of in decent company. Moreover, like an obedient school girl, the Soviet press obstinately suggested to the Soviet people that prostitution is a fatal disease of capitalist society; the social conditions to nurture such an illness in Soviet society are nonexistent. However, as it turns out, such conditions do exist in Soviet society, and how! Indeed, after the film's release, the film-makers were deluged with requests to explain how one could become a prostitute. Yet they had earnestly aimed at the exact opposite result—namely, through the example of the tragic fate of the film's charming heroine, to demonstrate that it is senseless to search for happiness beyond the oceans, if only in wealthy foreigners' beds.

The professional critics did not treat *Inter-Girl* favorably. Indeed, from the artistic point of view, Todorovskii's film is by no means a masterpiece. Its strengths lie in the fact that it quite accurately reflected the state of contemporary Soviet public consciousness, tastes, interests, and aspirations—the mind of a people who have grown exasperated with long lines for meat, with a stressful and unstable life. Increasingly, people yearn for a sense of well-being, stores with full supplies of goods and commodities, property, love, and mutual understanding. In a world of lost illusions and seeking eternal values, *Inter-Girl* arouses hope for the future and faith in a spiritual renaissance. In the film the concept of sin and repentance, to which present-day Soviet society widely adheres, is developed with reference to everyday, domestic, social, and familiar realities, thereby widely perceptible to the mass consciousness. The effect of *Inter-Girl*'s moral influence is thus a hundredfold in comparison to the most perfectly crafted, intelligent, profound, and masterfully directed *auteur* films. And from this perspective, one could predict that the professional critics would not place Todorovskii's picture "in with the dozen." The fruits that it collected were not from a foreign garden.

Within the context of today's Soviet cinema, *Inter-Girl* is more an exception to the rule than the rule itself, yet the film seemingly sustains its vulnerable (according to the critics) mythology, its somewhat incomplete artistic construction, and the embryo of a positive experience, of which Soviet society is in such need at the present time. Having soberly given meaning to its tragic past, having

Inter-Girl

wept and repented, it is now time for the Soviet people to remove the funereal clothing and, taking in a breath of fresh air, to set about immediately tackling the problems at hand. But then again, right now events are evolving every minute, and peace of mind comes only through sleep. And yet, more often this serves only to constrict speeches, decisions, and good intentions, which, as is well known, oil the road to hell. There is little activity, almost no practical deeds, and only an imitation of operational activity; consequently, thus far and despite the fact that perestroika was inaugurated five years ago, there has been no noticeable improvement in societal life. And the state of the Soviet film industry serves as a graphic example of this.

Today, all the preconditions for productive and creative work seem to have emerged: not only does there exist a freedom of which the Soviet people used only to dream, no longer are matters planned centrally, no one is demanding accounts; but also there are no censored boundaries, except of course the preservation of state secrets. "Create! Invent! Try it out!" declared the classic of Socialist Realism Vladimir Maiakovskii. At first, many genuinely jumped at the open opportunities, with a flood of cameramen gushing forth, though shortly thereafter seriously running aground because of excessively high taxes and numerous prohibitions. There then emerged various modifications of independent creative associations and joint ventures with foreign firms—involving both independents and the largest Soviet film studios, such as Lenfilm, Mosfilm, and Georgia-film. They set up related commercial enterprises: (1) the Union of Cinematographers of the USSR; and, more recently, (2) the All-Union Film Center, founded thanks to the energetic temperament and surprising penetrative force of the director Polan Bykov. Thirdly, Goskino is no longer all-powerful; under its roof or, more precisely, on its ruins now stands a refuge of 14 small yet entirely independent studios—mostly those who remain rather afraid of breaking away from their benefactor, fearing to risk rushing out into the open, alas, and for the time being still cautiously weathering the storm.

The first films have now appeared that were produced beyond the boundaries imposed by the former official structure of the Soviet cinema. Thus, Lyngin's picture *Taxi Blues* was produced owing to the creative commercial association Troitskii Most (Trinity Bridge) at Lenfilm. According to a preliminary forecast, already in 1990 the independent cinema is releasing for distribution 140 films, i.e., approximately as many as the state-owned studios are producing. Moreover, judging from all appearances, this figure will grow from year to year.

However, the general situation regarding the independent associations and cooperatives still remains very complicated. Film studios, technical equipment, film stock, and commercial output remain concentrated in the larger state studios, to a certain extent in Goskino. Thus, the old monopolistic rights remain intact. It suits young creative associations to apply superhuman efforts in order to puncture the circular defense which still holds the "film magnets." A free market has yet to come into being, and new recruits are still obliged to resort to the services of the black market—whether simply profiteers or the large studios calling for clients and applicants to pay double or triple the fee for their "good deeds."

Naturally, in order to stand their ground in an unequal battle, the independent film-makers have created their own association. Such an organization

Taxi Blues

recognizes the defense of its ideological, economic, and legal pursuits. However, because the association has been in existence only for a few months, it is still too early to speak about the practical results of its activities.

Not surprisingly, under such severe economic conditions, the independent cinema initially demonstrated a preference for box-office-oriented films. In seeking to earn as much money as possible and as quickly as possible, so as not to capsize while still in a nascent state, the studio heads and the leaders of the creative associations are searching for the most expedient means of reaching audiences. It has become commonplace to follow the contours of American smash hits, with their Soviet progeny pouring blood, murder, and crime across the screen and becoming increasingly adept at doing so. It has also become commonplace, incidentally, for criminal weapons to be in circulation, expecially by those criminals who do not possess their own imagination. For instance, a couple of years ago Kara's film *Lawful Thieves*, a romanticization of the criminal world along the lines of *The Godfather*, filled Soviet screens; and in one scene the mafia tortured a victim with a hot iron, the model of which was immediately seized upon and about which Soviet legal organizations gleefully informed television viewers.

However, the issue is not only that contemporary Soviet films have become increasingly brutal. Such a phenomenon has not sprung out of nowhere, for such is Soviet reality: during the entire 73 years of Soviet authority, never has there been such a violent, criminal environment as that which exists today. The screen's violence approaches pornographic limits. While to most observers this seems the most hopeful means of drawing people into film theaters, it is in fact a false and illusory means. Collected data clearly attest to the fact that in the last two to three years only a few Soviet films have managed to muster an audience of 20 million, which constitutes a domestic hit by Soviet standards. The very same sociological research indicates that in fact the mass audience prefers something completely different: a strong romantic hero, pure unadulterated love, and an American-style happy ending—elementary, of course, yet completely understandable, especially now and particularly in the Soviet Union.

In this regard, the two years of independent cinema's experience demonstrate that it has yet to learn to take into account the viewers' desires, preferences, and its earliest emotional breaking-points, viewers having been only recently liberated from diverse strictures and taboos. However, as the saying goes, this misfortune isn't the problem; in the end, specialists will assist sociologists, social commentators, and social psychologists. In addition, another phenomenon serves to exacerbate the situation: among film directors, actors, and scenarists an increasing number of dilettantes have appeared on the scene. With rare exceptions, the Soviet cinema has not been noted for its high level of professionalism. In the West, despite the success of Soviet films at international competitions, which would seem to attest to the existence of a circle of masterful Soviet film-makers, it appears that so far only one Soviet film-maker, Nikita Mikhailov, has been recognized as a professional.

Unfortunately, other film-makers such as Elem Klimov, Alesksei German, and Roman Balaian have remained silent during the past few years and are only now emerging from the creative crisis. As far as those who have remained in the flow of the production line, as it were, the primary mass of film production has been and still is dominated by the "intermediates." And at this very moment the situation has reached catastrophic proportions: every second film director possesses neither the necessary talent nor the cinematographic background and training. But then, that holds true of a number of realms other than the cinema.

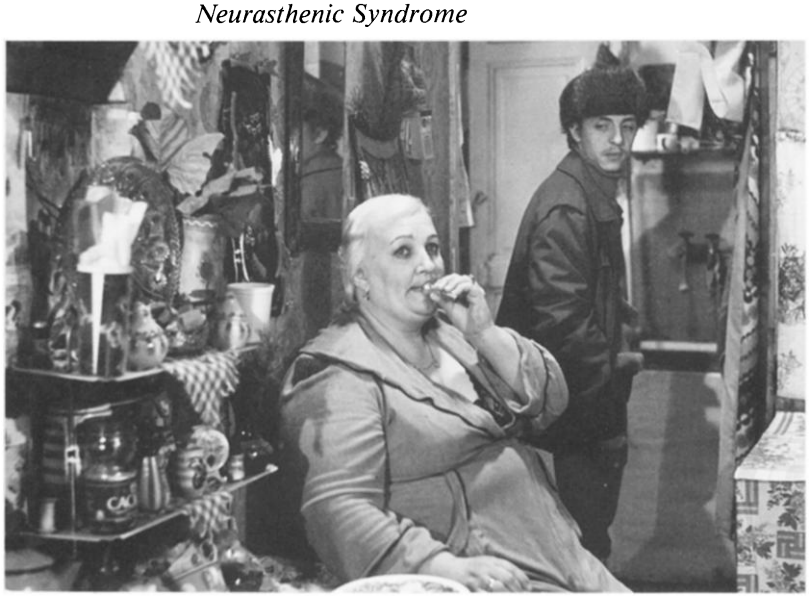
However, in the case of the cinema, the matter is complicated by a shift in the generational composition of the film audience, a change not simply from one generation to another. Before our

eyes has emerged a new type of person, one reared and educated according to a different culture than that of the previous generation, altering its very genetic code. The fall of the Berlin Wall, dividing the East and the West, has cleared the way towards global awareness, the computerization of all spheres of life, and a rock culture staged from accessible American films. This and many other aspects relating to the revolutionary processes underway in the USSR, are moulding a different type of person—one who is more practical, business-like, and rational. Of course, this has not come about without some loss—that is to say, the "Russian mentality" is noticeably vanishing, but that can't be helped.

All this demonstrates the extent to which the Soviet cinema is ill-equipped to cope with such changes. After a period of increasing wealth, it will be possible to "reconstruct" the infrastructure of the cinema, to regulate and adjust production, to improve distribution, and even to master the profession. However, the road towards meeting and satisfying the spiritual and aesthetic requirements of the new audience is extraordinarily difficult, a fact borne out not only by the works of independent directors, the ranks of which are increasingly being filled by experienced professionals, but also by the latest work of the state film studios.

Above all, we must render the Soviet cinema its due: it was among the first cultural sector of society to support Gorbachev's perestroika. The Union of Cinematographers not only effectuated a revolutionary turnabout in the system of the cinema—affecting the activities of writers, artists, and musicians—but also initiated the move to create the social organization Memorial, which is obsessed with the need to tell the truth about the victims of the Stalinist repression. At the most difficult point, politically, a sanctuary was provided for the members of the Mezhregional'nyi deputies' group—that is, the leftist radical wing headed by Yeltsin. Often the most significant and earliest means of mass communication, film became the first to assimilate such new and unexplored subcultures as the world of drug addicts, criminals, and prostitutes; to reinterpret and give new meaning to history; and to return to the people forgotten or forbidden names, those of such political figures as Bukharin, the writer Platonov, and Tsar Nicholas II. On the crest of this new free thought rose documentary film. In two to three years it did as much as would have required decades in previous eras. One can cite hundreds of names, but to the uninformed reader this will mean little. Nevertheless, the fact remains that during the period of perestroika the cinema's social and political journalists and commentators lived through their "starring" hour.

Neurasthenic Syndrome



But, once again, difficulties were encountered. The road to the audience proved to be a muddy one, with spectators unable to physically take in all that the screen offered. In their haste to speak out, those very same documentary film-makers often did not have time to put the finishing touches on their product, thereby releasing their works in an incomplete state. On the other hand, having become obsessed with unmasking, exposure, and criticism, these film-makers forgot that there are two sides to the medallion. Subsequently, the process began to fade, considerably: sensational material increasingly vanished from circulation. It became evident that a period of serious reflection, philosophical meditation and generalization, and new artistic quests was establishing itself. Simultaneously, however, few of the documentary film-makers appeared talented and clever in this regard. Nevertheless, one name did emerge: Stanislav Govorukhin, a well-known director of feature films, whose first documentary film was appropriately entitled, in the spirit of the times, *We Cannot Live This Way*. In exposing the everyday life of his compatriots, the nature of infringements of the law, which only served to more graphically reveal societal illnesses, and in comparing the Soviet way of life with that of other countries, the film's author reached a bleak and discomforting conclusion: that the experiment of 1917—in light of its violence, class approach, and national genocide—was unsuccessful, to put it mildly.

When the picture was released in cinemas, some found it delightful; others, repulsive. The

scale of responses was infinite: from decisive displeasure to complete apologetics. In any event, of those who saw it, none were left indifferent. As an artifact of artistic life, Govorukhin's work clearly served a valuable purpose: spectators needed not only information but also reflection and meditation, and for the latter it needed the positioning and impact of the camera to facilitate this.

However, because this was not carried out with bitterness, Govurkhin's ardent and honest film did not disturb or agitate the younger generation, not to mention adolescents and teenagers, those who frequent cinemas the most. Perhaps this resulted from the fact that the younger generation is entering life not instilled with a sense of faith and hope, simply denying the morals and principles of their predecessors; while not realizing its own ideals, it nonetheless reacts vehemently against what it does not accept.

In every possible manner, the young evade "an upbringing founded in truth"—unnatural, genre-based formulations nauseate them, such as the "film tale" and "film novel," which for many years dominated the Soviet screens; and they become irritated by and exasperated with those heroes of the "peace sector" variety. Not only were and are there no cleverly conceived films to entice them, but also—judging by the scenarios being thrust into production—in the near future there will be no such films. Thus, rather than undertaking worthwhile pursuits and legitimate work, they will continue to pass the time in "salons" showing pirated copies of videocassettes, not knowing where to direct their hyperkinetic energy.

Strictly speaking, these processes are characteristic not simply of the younger section of the audience: a re-evaluation of values, those relating to life in general and to film as well, is taking place at all generational levels. But it seems to most observers that, like the Soviet government, the cinema is tardy, failing to respond to society's psychological mood, which is opposed not to the problematics confronting the cinema, but to that which leads society to an impasse. For instance, Kira Muratova's film *Asthenic Syndrome* was not only alienating and unintelligible to the mass audience, but also has unintentionally irritated many professionals, despite the film's philosophical profoundness, political topicality, and artistic boldness. Muratov's film does not merely deal with women who have lost their husbands and with the state of a society

Neurasthenic Syndrome

that, having lost its authoritarian leadership, is attempting to console itself in its fear. Nor is the film simply about a hero afflicted with asthenic syndrome. It is also about the Soviet way of life—even the connoisseur and aficionado of the cinema cannot submit to the finale, where in the closing frame a night subway train carries off a person who has ceased to believe in anything, into the dark tunnel of infinity.

The artistic quest of contemporary Soviet directors—their aspiring to enrich and diversify professional modes, to depart from imitations by means of well-established patterns, to create some sort of new style meeting current needs—is not yielding appreciable success. However, these endeavors are evident in the previously mentioned *Asthenic Syndrome*; Sergei Solov'ev's latest picture, entitled *The Black Rose, an Emblem of Sorrow—the Red Rose, an Emblem of Love*; and V. Ogorodnikov's film *Prishvin's Paper Eyes*. One Soviet critic very wittily caught the essence of this quest, calling the first picture satiated with "hysterics," the second with "anecdotes," and the third with "cabbage." The critic closes as follows: "The masters have thus far been unable to tear themselves away from the dead embraces of former politics and turn these poetics inside out." (*Iskusstvo kino*, no. 5, 1990, p. 37)

Consequently, the Soviet cinema is indeed experiencing a most difficult period. The quantity of produced films grows, while the quality is not getting any better, indeed declining. Perhaps, of course, this is the decline preceding an imminent ascension; after all, it is said that one must hit rock bottom before surfacing. The recent festival of premieres offers some sign of hope, with several new names discovered. The pathos of their work echoes the theme "We Can't Live This Way." It would be nice to know how we can and ought to live, at the least with regard to the cinema.

Peter Brunette

Helma Sanders-Brahms: A Conversation

If the German director Helma Sanders-Brahms is less well-known than her countrywoman Margarethe von Trotta, many would claim that she is nevertheless the better film-maker. This is not to denigrate the achievements of Von Trotta, whose cinematic gifts are real and whose political commitment in the face of commercial pressures has always been exemplary. And Sanders-Brahms's films are hardly flawless. It's just that they project a visual and verbal intensity, a kind of intellectual force, that sometimes feels almost dangerous. She is an entirely *serious* director, even when she does comedy. And this is of course one very good reason why her films have yet to catch on in the United States.

What is most curious about this neglect is that while her films are demanding, they are always strongly narrative and rarely self-indulgent in formal terms. She is an unrepentant auteurist in the European manner, writing the script of every film she directs, and for better or worse, they are very much *her* films. Her best known film by far is *Germany, Pale Mother* (1980; released in the US in 1984), a deeply autobiographical work that tries to understand, through the story of her own parents, both the insanity of Nazism and the postwar "prosperity" that turned out to be so hollow. It is a film of astonishing intensity that regularly leaves audiences shuddering with its raw power.

After stints as assistant director with Fassbinder and Pasolini, Sanders-Brahms, who will turn 50 this year, made several documentaries for West German television. Her first international success came in 1974 with *Under the Pavement is the Beach*, a self-reflexive, intellectualized, but deeply felt love story that concerns two disillusioned participants of the upheaval of 1968 and its aftermath.

Next came *Shirin's Wedding* (1976), which contrasts first and third world values by focusing on a Turkish peasant girl who travels to Germany, alone, in search of her lover. After losing her job, she is raped and because she has lost her virginity she can no longer hope to marry him. Prostitution and death follow. The film was a success with German audiences, but right-wing Turkish nationalists picketed theaters where the film was being screened and threatened to kill the director and the Turkish actress who played Shirin.

Heinrich followed in 1978, a film about the Romantic writer Heinrich von Kleist who committed suicide at age 37. Sanders-Brahms feels that it is "in a way, my most developed film," but perhaps too difficult for most audiences. After *Germany, Pale Mother* came *No Mercy, No Future* (1981), which won a British Film Institute award. It concerns a mentally disturbed girl who, because she thinks that God is present in blacks, foreign workers, and old men, makes love to all of them, always asking if "it's you." Her next film was a German-French production called *A Future for Emily* (1984, released in the US in 1986), told in 24 hours, the first of what Sanders-Brahms calls her "reduced films." It stars Brigitte Fossey and recounts the

A Note on Availability

Unfortunately, the *only* film of Sanders-Brahms available in this country is the 16mm version of *Germany, Pale Mother*. (New Yorker Films; 212-247-6110) As of this writing, nothing is available on video tape. Hopefully, this situation will change soon.

eternal story of mother-daughter conflict, an obsessive theme of the director's, across two generations. "I don't really like this film," she now says quite openly. "There are many things I like about it, but it's too dry-cleaned, the most 'proper' film I've ever made."

To my mind, her next film, *Laputa* (1986), is her best—but, sadly, it has never been distributed in the US. And as it's very much a Cold War story, it may never be. Set in a divided Berlin, which is seen as a modern-day equivalent of Swift's rarified, over-intellectualized Laputa from *Gulliver's Travels*, it tells of the frustrating love affair between a French architect (Sami Frey) and a Polish photographer (Krystina Janda). Their desire is immense, but political boundaries and professional demands keep them apart or, in their brief moments together in "neutral" Berlin, in a constant emotional turmoil.

Maneuvers and *Felix* (both 1987) represent a new departure toward the comic for Sanders-Brahms. The first takes place in the early fifties, in a recently divided Germany. It concerns the successful attempt of an East German spy (trained to dance the tango) to seduce an employee of the West German ministry of defense, who is already having an affair with her boss. The tone of this film is difficult to specify, oscillating delicately (and brilliantly) between the silly and the serious. For *Felix*, Sanders-Brahms joined with three other German woman directors (Christel Buschmann, Helke Sander, and von Trotta) to turn the female gaze, in a series of four sketches, on the rising German actor Ulrich Tukur, previously seen as the terrorist Andreas Baader in Reinhard Hauff's political film, *Stammheim*.

Perhaps what is most difficult for a general American audience to appreciate in her work is, first of all, the unabashed "literariness" of her films, which make constant references to such recondite material as classical drama, eighteenth-century fiction, and twentieth-century poetry. Second, all her films insist relentlessly on the political and historical dimension of all emotional relationships. Unfortunately, the typical Western desire to see love as something that transcends individuals, class, or century may perhaps keep this brilliant director from ever being a success in the United States, or even in her own country. When I last spoke with her, at the Berlin Film Festival in February 1990, she was not working; though she had completed two screenplays that she was anxious to start shooting, she hadn't yet found the necessary financial support to begin. Worse, she was embroiled in a dispute with festival authorities regarding their decision to open the festival in East Berlin, a historic first, with the American film *Steel Magnolias*.

Maneuvers

The earlier and more extensive part of this interview was conducted in English at the Montreal World Film Festival in August of 1988. The curious result of the two-part nature of our conversation is that much of it was conducted before the Berlin wall came down; in the interest of historical considerations, however, it seemed unwise to jettison the earlier material because it had become "out-of-date." It seems revealing in its own way, and strangely prescient.

Interview

BRUNETTE: *Can you give me your version of the disagreement with Moritz de Hadeln, the director of the Berlin Film Festival? There was a report in* Variety *that he's threatening to sue you.*

SANDERS-BRAHMS: I didn't really do very much. I just talked about *Steel Magnolias* and said it was

a bad film. But it's not only a bad film, to me it's provocative and even obscene to open this festival with that film. This is the festival of the opening of the wall; this was the first screening in East Berlin. I feel terrible that the people in East Berlin who have really had their revolution are confronted with four chattering American ladies making victory signs [a reference to the appearance of Sally Field, et al., at the screening in East Berlin]. It's obscene! I quit the selection committee because I felt we should choose another film to open the festival in East Berlin. There were many other possibilities, for example, *Spur der Steine*, a fine film that has been banned in East Germany since the mid-sixties.

I have my own ideas, but for the record, why do you think it was "obscene" to have an American film like Steel Magnolias *open the festival?*

It wouldn't have been obscene if they had shown *Music Box*, for example. But this film, a film that has nothing to do with what happened in East Berlin, that has nothing to do with German history, just a bad film, a silly film, a soap, at this moment—well, it's the degradation of both Germanys into banana republics! And this is not only sad for the Germans but also for the Americans.

Let's talk about Germany, Pale Mother, *your best known film in the US. The violence and the horror of the last third of the film, especially the scene in the dentist's office, seem to affect people deeply. What did you have in mind there? Do you now think it was too violent?*

No. I know that people react to the pulling of the teeth—I don't know why, but it touches people more profoundly than seeing a head chopped off! In the personal life of my mother, I think it was the most horrible moment. And it's an image of what happens to the country at the same time, this destruction of the country's identity. First, fascism had to be destroyed, but then so many other things in the German identity were destroyed with it, including our positive heritage. For example, in East Berlin they destroyed the castle of the Prussian kings, a marvel of architecture. All in order to destroy the heritage of Prussia. But this is crazy, you can't destroy your heritage like that. They also destroyed the Sportpalast. Of course, that's where Goebbels made his horrible speech, but it's also where Rosa Luxemburg made *her* speeches.

How autobiographical is the film? Is that your voice in the voice-over?

Yes. It's autobiographical to a very large extent, all the facial paralysis of my mother, the teeth-pulling, the suicide attempt, throwing the soup, and all that—it's all autobiographical, all out of my own nightmares. But I also talked to many women who lived through this period in order to do something that was not only personal but that had some importance for others too. I didn't do the film just because I wanted to tell *my* story, to get rid of my nightmares, but to tell the story of Germany and of the Germany of normal people, normal women. The rape, on the other hand, was not done to my mother; I saw it done to another woman, but it *was* done by Americans. And I saw it, and I was terribly frightened. I had never seen the male sex organ before, never seen a woman treated like that. I was four years old.

Why did you include the long fairy tale that the mother tells the little girl in the woods? It lasts something like 15 or 20 minutes.

Well, I had shot a lot of scenes of people at the end of the war, and when I saw them at the editing table, I felt they weren't really strong enough. I thought the documentary footage was really much stronger, and that I could never reach the surrealism of these scenes with what I shot. So one day while we were shooting I just asked the actress Eva Mattes to tell this fairy tale, and when I saw this at the editing table, I thought it was more powerful. It spoke more deeply, I think, about the fears of the mother, about the German situation.

There has been some question raised in the US, by Anton Kaes in his new book From Hitler to "Heimat," *among others, that some recent German films dealing with German history, including yours, have perhaps been too forgiving. I am thinking of the line in* Germany, Pale Mother *in which you say in voice-over "I accuse you mother, but with what right? I was just lucky to be born later." Is there a danger here of letting the earlier generation off too easily?*

I have spent years and years and years just blaming my parents for what happened and in a way I felt that . . . well, as you can see in my film, my parents did not fight against Hitler directly. They were not supporters either, and that's why my father had to become a soldier. That doesn't help

the horrible crimes the Germans have committed. Maybe there should be a film that is more accusing . . . But when I see all these American films that have never really accused the Americans of all the crimes they did to the Indians, for example—there is not one film that really shows all the terror that the Americans have committed against the Indians. I ask myself, how *dare* they accuse my parents. . . . Let me tell you something else. In 1986, the American ambassador invited me to a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Olympic Games in Berlin. They wanted to celebrate that and to celebrate the memory of Jesse Owens. I wrote them saying that I couldn't participate because in 1936 my parents were already aware of what was going to take place, Fritz Lang had already gone, and many things had already happened and many things were prepared. I couldn't celebrate the Olympics when I know that three years later my father was sent to Poland to fight Hitler's war there. How *dare* they accuse us of not accusing our parents and at the same time send us an invitation to celebrate the Olympic games? This is crazy! What are the Americans thinking?

Well, in the US the 1936 Olympics are perceived as having been a defeat for Hitler. He goes there to celebrate the wonderful Aryan race, and Jesse Owens, a black man, wins all the medals. The mythology, at any rate, is that this was a complete embarrassment for Hitler.

No! The Olympic games were Hitler's biggest political success, and that caused England and France to give in to his constant expansionism. You know the famous Riefenstahl film, and even she celebrates Jesse Owens! It's true that he won six medals, but the Germans won far more. Many people believed in 1933 that Hitler would disappear very quickly. And it was the Olympic games, with all these nations coming to Berlin, that confirmed Hitler in his position and made it possible for the fascists to become stronger and stronger.

Perhaps the problem with the film is that the main characters are your parents who did certain things or didn't do certain things, and at the same time they're meant to be representative of all of Germany. So you're thinking that your parents did not do anything themselves, they were not Nazis . . .

No, no, I didn't show that they didn't do anything. This is not true! I show my father killing the Polish woman . . .

Yes, but he's also shown to be very upset while he's doing it.

He *was* very upset.

But if we take your parents as symbolic of the German people, when you say that you don't want to accuse them, maybe that's letting them off too easily. As your parents, it's correct, but insofar as they represent the German nation, it's too easy. Is that a possible way to think about it?

No. Because you must really distinguish, as even the Russians did, between fascists and Germans. There was fascism, and the Germans suffered under it for 12 years, and were not able to get rid of the fascists by themselves. On the other side, Germans are not born fascists. Germany is as horrible and as innocent as any other nation. The Germans are not a special nation, a monster nation compared to all other nations. It's just not true.

But you don't believe that the Nazis were just a small group of . . .

No, no, and I also tried to accuse my parents of having shut the blinds, and of trying to get away from what was happening. There are so many films where you just show the cruelties of fascism, and this is right, but I don't think that just repeating and repeating and repeating the crimes is helping.

My sense is that the problem is that, as you said earlier, you had gone through a very long period accusing your parents and then had finally said that's enough, how do I know that I would not have done the same thing if I had been in their place. But all the audience sees is this last part of the process, the forgiveness, and doesn't see the previous 20 years of your accusations. Thus it could appear that forgiveness was coming too easily.

All I can say in response is the story about the Olympic games. That's when the Americans should have said no to the fascists. Then they would have helped Germany in a very big way. Look how many Jews had already left by 1936! Wasn't it clear by that time that the Jews were being chased out of their houses? How could the Americans come and help Hitler?

Let me ask you about another film, Laputa. *How does it relate to the "Laputa" chapter of Swift's* Gulliver's Travels, *which is quoted in the beginning of the film?*

Laputa

Gulliver's Travels is usually thought of as a book for children, as Sami Frey, the actor in the film, objected when I first suggested to him that he read chapters three and four. He was astonished. One of the biggest problems in the world today is that people are too Laputian, and you can see this in the film because they just talk and talk. Neither one of them can move out of their political and emotional situation. But I also made this film because I have been in these kind of love situations in my own life.

Did you write the script, as you do for most of your films?

Yes, in fact I wrote six drafts of it before the actors came on the scene. But there was a lot of improvisation after that. In fact, I really feel that I should share author credit with the two actors, and I tried to indicate that by the way the credits are set up in the beginning of the film.

How did this collaboration work?

Well, let's take the scene in which Sami Frey rides around on the bicycle on the roof of the apartment house. Sami wanted to get the older man he talks to in the scene into the film—he's the man I live with, a real Laputian!—and so he invented the business with the bicycle, which was just sitting there. It later comes to be very important in the film. The bicycle is also a way to make the scene less heavy. But it is also a very important symbol for the whole idea of *Laputa*: it conveys the inability to get anywhere, to be in full power, to be all organically connected up. Another collaborative moment was the love scene, which took two or three days out of a total of 12 shooting days. The two actors wanted to figure it out for themselves. They were absolutely sure they did not want to do a conventional love scene, but instead wanted to show brutality and tenderness together. It took them a long time, and the production team got very nervous, but all we could do was wait for them to come up with something.

Do directors identify with one character in a film more than with another? Is it easier for you as a woman to identify with the female character in your most recent film, Maneuvers*?*

Obviously I identify most with the secretary. But there are two principal characters in the film, and I tried to identify with both of them. What I wanted to show in this film was how politics today tends to exploit love and human emotions. It's a comedy, of course, but I still think it's something serious. And it's especially true in my country, Germany. Both of the characters are exploited, because he has dreams that are completely different from his political work, because he wants to work for socialism. In the beginning he'd like to go to South America to fight in revolutionary struggles, but he's told he has to seduce secretaries in Bonn instead. So it's a tragic situation for both of them, a result of our situation in Germany; the film is set in the 1950s, but the same thing is true today.

I notice that this film, like Laputa*, is about East-West relations, which you seem to be greatly concerned with. Could you say this film is a kind of comic version of* Laputa*?*

Yes. But that would reduce the film. It's not a comic version, but rather another attempt to speak about the situation. For myself, it's painful, but at the same time it's very fruitful. I have the privilege, and at the same time, the difficulty of living in Berlin. I'm always confronted by this situation. I can pass the border everyday and I can see that behind the wall people live in very different circumstances than we do, but that the same time they're the same people as we are. They speak the same language, they have the same things that I like and the same things that I dislike in my countrymen. It's very strange. It's a German problem and, at the same time, as I tried to show in *Laputa*, it's a problem all over the world.

So your films are deeply marked by the fact that you live in Berlin?

Well, I could also say that I live in Berlin because of these things. I could easily go to live in

Paris, for example; I have friends there and possibilities for work, but I stay in Berlin, though I hate the city. But there are so many things that ask to be written in this city, so many stories that ask to be told, much more than in other cities. All the Paris stories seem to have been told already, but not the Berlin stories.

The other film you made that year is Felix, *which you directed with three other German woman directors.*

Felix was my first attempt at comedy; it's kind of an *étude* for making *Maneuvers. The Future of Emily* is about five people and *Laputa* is about two people, and so what I found tempting about *Felix* is the possibility of making a 20-minute film about just one lonely man talking into a telephone. Unfortunately, after two days of shooting, the producer asked me to tone it down and now *Felix* seems too proper to me, like *The Future of Emily.*

Germany has probably the greatest number of woman directors who are having an impact on the international scene, whereas in the United States there is perhaps more feminism, but fewer woman directors. Can you talk about what it's like to be a woman director in Germany? Do you see yourself as a feminist director?

I wouldn't really define myself as a feminist director. I'm a director and I'm a woman, of course, and my films show the world as seen through the eyes of a woman and show the experiences that I have had in my life. But I'm a little bit anxious about "feminist" films in the sense of films that just talk about the bad situation of women who couldn't really live with their husbands or with their boyfriends. My favorite woman director is not a film director but a theater director, Arianne Mnouchkine. What always impressed me about her, and about other important creative people I have known . . . well, she is a woman and Pasolini was a man, Fassbinder was a man—but in a way, they, and I, all have half of the other sex inside ourselves. We live on the edge of our own sex, with a tendency to fall over into the other one, with a tendency to have the obsessions of the other one also in our heads. To me true artistic emancipation would mean this—that your work was strong and powerful, whether you were a woman or a man. And of course it has to reflect your own experience —my own work is very personal. I'm always trying to explain my own life, my own experiences, my own country. I wouldn't say you should just make impersonal films, that's something that I hate. On the other hand, I think film is the most highly developed art that there is. You have to have the skill of a general leading an army to make a film. You also have to have the skill of a painter, as Pasolini showed when he portrayed himself as Giotto; you need the eye of a painter, the tongue of a writer, I don't know, you need the heart of an angel and a devil. And then you can make films.

It seems though that you're fudging things a bit. Does it really make no difference if you're a man or a woman?

I don't want to hide anything! I just think that, to me, if the film director is good, it's a hermaphrodite person. When I'm making love to a man, I'm a woman. But when I'm making a film, I'm a hermaphrodite. I have to identify with the very bad feelings as well as the very good feelings. I have to have it all in myself and I have to have both the male and the female in myself. That's one of the main things that I learned from Pasolini and Mnouchkine.

I think one of the things feminism has taught all of us is that everyone has elements of both sexes in them.

Yes. This is very important. But what bothers me about feminism is that it hasn't solved any of the problems of the really oppressed women, like women workers who have children, or who have terrible husbands who get drunk and mistreat them. This problem hasn't even been very much talked about by feminists, who mostly come from bourgeois families and don't really care about what is going on every day. One of the problems in Germany is that the question of women as mothers is not talked about at all, because the feminists are almost all women who don't have children or husbands. The biggest problem in our society is that there is almost no place left for children, for women having children. I've had a child under rather privileged circumstances, but I had it on my own and through this I've come to understand part of the problem, even though I can only vaguely imagine what women who work in factories or who have husbands who beat them have to suffer.

I am struck by the ability you show in your films to map the personal over the historical, and

vice versa. You always seem to want to talk about history, yet always in very personal terms, between lovers or whatever. Is that a fair description of what you're trying to do?

Yes, it's perfect.

Why is that important to you? Is it, as some would say, because you're a woman? Are female directors somehow more in contact with the personal than male directors?

No, I don't think so. Film has to be very personal. But I sometimes speak of cinema as a place where you can have a collective dream. Nowadays we live with so many fears, you know, of atomic power plants such as Chernobyl, and the cinema is the place—well, in normal life if you have a problem you dream about it and then the next morning you can confront your life again—cinema is a little bit like that in being a collective possibility of reflecting all the threats to our lives and then being able to behave in a different way, you know, as you behave differently after you've dreamt during the night. That's why cinema also has to be like a nightmare. People have to work on their fears, even if they're very horrible. And cinema has kind of the same function as dreams. And that's why my personal approach to cinema has been to explain political problems we have through personal experience and at the same time to have the two levels of the person who suffers or who is happy and . . . for example, what does loving mean during the time of fascism? Having a husband? What does it mean to be worn out and sad after the liberation? In a way, the feelings in *Germany, Pale Mother* are the opposite of what really happens. There's sort of a private place where people try to get rid of what happened outside, and yet they're very much influenced in their daily lives, because the man has to go to Poland and to France, and the woman has to stay alone. They cannot keep away from it.

Some people might say that this is a "woman's way" of looking at history, you know, in personal, individual terms, rather than in terms of kings and wars and so on.

Maybe, but I think it's just my personal sensibility, about how we are formed by the world we live in. For example, in *Laputa*, there's a horrible love story and it takes place in the eighties, and it just seems to me that that's the way it is with love stories in the eighties. You know, this terrible brawl between men and women that just makes them freeze, unable to overcome their personal borders, in a way. Whereas this part, for my parents, well, they didn't have *these* problems. But being a woman I also claim a very personal approach to what film is. There are many women making films, and I think my films are very different, say, from Lina Wertmüller's. And she's a woman. And my way of portraying people is very different from Leni Riefenstahl's, and she's a woman too. And it's even different from Margarethe von Trotta, and she's a woman living at the same time and in the same country. Of course, the fact that I'm a woman is very important for my work and for myself. But when I'm making films, I have to find my own personal way to show personal and political and historical relationships and situations. There is a constant line of development going through all my films, a kind of "research" into what our era is doing to the human soul. I try to find out about that—this is my way of working.

I wanted to ask you something about Felix *in this regard. As you know, much feminist film theory concerns the way in which the cinema is set up for the male gaze, for men to look at women. But what I noticed was that in your segment of* Felix, *in which the audience* only *sees a man talking on the telephone, the situation seems to be reversed.*

Absolutely. That's exactly why I made it. I was fascinated with the idea of making a film about one man and a telephone. In fact, I was the last one to be asked to join in on making the film, but I was the first one to have a script done. I remembered all the monologues that the various companions in my life came out with! (Laughter) When I made *Laputa* I thought it was all very tragic, but now I'm starting to think it's all very funny and ridiculous the way we treat each other.

One of the reasons that your films seem so powerfully different is that they're so literary. Kleist, in Heinrich, *is a writer, the characters in* Under the Pavement *are acting in a Greek tragedy,* A Future for Emily *starts with Brigitte Fossey acting in Kleist's* Penthesilea, Laputa *begins with a long quotation from Swift's* Gulliver's Travels *and* Germany, Pale Mother *begins with a Brecht poem. Is this true of all of your films in some way or another?*

Not all of them, but you're right, it's quite often. I can't really explain why I do this. To me,

Felix

the voice and the speaking and the language are very important, and yet at the same time I think my films are very visual. I mean, it's not all just talking. I try to find different levels of communication with the audience. Of course, normal dialogue is one, but it is not the only one. In poems or fairy tales or literary texts, language is very much intensified and very dense and very wonderful. Also when I construct my scenes and write dialogue I try to be as intense as possible. In these texts, I find a certain concentration of ideas and situations.

And your films are *also strongly visual at the same time. I was especially struck by the flies crawling all over the Nazi flag at the beginning of* Germany, Pale Mother.

An image like that can't be planned. When we shot that scene it was a hot summer night and all the flies were sitting on the flag, and I asked them to shoot it that way. I felt it was a wonderful image of a historical and political situation. It reflects so much. It would have been very difficult to construct it, you know, to have 2,000 flies at the same time, making honey on the flag! I'd like to take credit for it, but it was just given to me. (Laughter)

I think you also deal with sound very nicely. In the same film, for example, the Christmas carols that can be heard playing scratchily on the radio while the bombs are falling.

And the voice is talking about the great German victories, and at the same time you have all the bombing, people are fleeing to the shelters. When I mix my sound, I always try to make the sound not only underline the emotion, as in the normal Hollywood film, but also to construct a sound track that has contradictions in it.

Let me ask you are more general question. Earlier we spoke of the way you map the personal over the historical, so to speak. Another way to think of this in your films is the relation between love and politics. Do you prefer to see political situations through *individual love stories? Which comes first, the politics or the love?*

I'd say it's just like life, there are moments when politics comes first, and moments when love comes first. The political situation we're living in has enormous influence on our love life. If we were Martians, and could look down on it all, we would say that people on Earth react in a very different way than they reacted 200 years ago, and they don't react to things in the same way in different parts of the world where modern society hasn't penetrated as much. Cinema has the tendency to make believe that the political situation has nothing to do with the love of a man for a woman, or a woman for a man, but it's not true.

One of the strongest scenes in Laputa *is when they are trying to discuss their problems over the din of the soccer match on television. It seems to say that the rest of the world goes on anyway, no matter what your problems are. I was impressed by the sheer banality of the game, and the suggestion that no one ever gets what they want in this world. Is this what you were trying to do?*

Yes. The important thing about *Laputa* is that this is a one-and-a-half-hour love scene between a man and a woman, and the circle around them is the rest of the world. Overcoming the political system is no problem for them, it doesn't even play a role. Their problem is to overcome their fears and anxieties, which *are* a product of our society. In a way, *Laputa* is the most pessimistic film I've ever made. There's no way out of the situation. They embrace, and then there's the circle and the frontier again. But there is a way out in comedy. It's true that at the end of *Maneuvers* she's on one side and he's on

the other, but when she is rescued by the big hand of King Kong taking her out the window [in the form of the front scoop of a huge tractor], there's at least one image in which you can dream of a possible fairy-tale solution. And that's the direction I want to move in in the future. I think comedy is a wonderful means of letting people know that things are fleeting, and that there are solutions even for the most difficult problems, Even if it's only a fairy-tale solution in this film. I think you get stronger by laughing. That's why I made this film—to make people laugh and to make them feel strong. My model was the wonderful film of Ernst Lubitsch, *To Be or Not To Be*: the possibility of fighting against fascism by making it look ridiculous.

I guess I believe, though, that there are *certain inevitable contradictions in life such as, for example, the desire to be monogamous and the desire to be promiscuous. They can't be resolved, but merely lived through. That's why I liked* Laputa *so much. But I see now that you're saying that while that is true, it is not something to feel tragic about necessarily, but maybe something to laugh about.*

It's both at the same time. My favorite composer is Mozart because he is capable of making very tragic music but in the end you laugh about it. So for me a great comedy would not avoid showing the big problems of the world and the problems of the characters, but show them as something that can be laughed at. This gives the audience a certain power, the feeling that life is not only a trap but also a possibility.

Let's hope so!

(Laughter) And this also includes the political system, as well as the individual love stories. When you see *Laputa* you get the feeling that nothing can be done, you just have to live it again and again until you die. But this can be just as much of a trap as the situation itself. The idea that you cannot get out can be your trap. In *Felix* I tried to make the whole thing ridiculous, and in *Maneuvers* I tried to take up the important problems of the postwar period, but in a way that people could laugh at them. I love Preston Sturges's film *Sullivan's Travels* because it ends with the idea that the one thing you can do for humanity is to make them laugh.

Maybe moving from a tragic vision to a comic vision is part of the maturation process. When you're young you think everything is tragic, but as you get older you start to realize how comic it all is.

Yes, but, well, I have a child who's 11 years old and she would hate a film like *Laputa*.

That's healthy, I think.

(Laughter) Yes, I think so too. But she liked *Maneuvers*, except that she thought the film should end when he takes her in his arms. This is how she wants the world to be—that the young man takes the girl and that they are happy. That's the way children react to the world, and in a way they are right. We should be like them, we should ask the world to be nicer and to be a good home for us. But we're too wise and too mature!

Reviews

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover

Written and directed by Peter Greenaway. Photography: Sacha Vierny. Music: Michael Nyman. Producer: Kees Kasander. Miramax.

D. H. Lawrence once defined pornography as the confusion, due to anatomical proximity and cultural interdict, of the reproductive organs with the excretory organs. The scandal is that the confusion still reigns and conspires to give Peter Greenaway's brilliant film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* an X rating, summarily (and rightly) refused by Greenaway and Miramax, the film's American distributor. Still, the incredible good fortune of finding a Dutch patron/producer (Kees Kasander) willing to finance three film projects at a time and the scandal of the refused X rating (Godard's *Hail Mary* also benefited from such brouhaha) have combined to move Peter Greenaway from the margin, where he had already made five feature films, and catapult him into mainstream film consciousness, where he belonged all along.

The reviews thus far have predictably reduced the film to its most controversial moments (feces

the other, but when she is rescued by the big hand of King Kong taking her out the window [in the form of the front scoop of a huge tractor], there's at least one image in which you can dream of a possible fairy-tale solution. And that's the direction I want to move in in the future. I think comedy is a wonderful means of letting people know that things are fleeting, and that there are solutions even for the most difficult problems, Even if it's only a fairy-tale solution in this film. I think you get stronger by laughing. That's why I made this film—to make people laugh and to make them feel strong. My model was the wonderful film of Ernst Lubitsch, *To Be or Not To Be*: the possibility of fighting against fascism by making it look ridiculous.

I guess I believe, though, that there are *certain inevitable contradictions in life such as, for example, the desire to be monogamous and the desire to be promiscuous. They can't be resolved, but merely lived through. That's why I liked* Laputa *so much. But I see now that you're saying that while that is true, it is not something to feel tragic about necessarily, but maybe something to laugh about.*

It's both at the same time. My favorite composer is Mozart because he is capable of making very tragic music but in the end you laugh about it. So for me a great comedy would not avoid showing the big problems of the world and the problems of the characters, but show them as something that can be laughed at. This gives the audience a certain power, the feeling that life is not only a trap but also a possibility.

Let's hope so!

(Laughter) And this also includes the political system, as well as the individual love stories. When you see *Laputa* you get the feeling that nothing can be done, you just have to live it again and again until you die. But this can be just as much of a trap as the situation itself. The idea that you cannot get out can be your trap. In *Felix* I tried to make the whole thing ridiculous, and in *Maneuvers* I tried to take up the important problems of the postwar period, but in a way that people could laugh at them. I love Preston Sturges's film *Sullivan's Travels* because it ends with the idea that the one thing you can do for humanity is to make them laugh.

Maybe moving from a tragic vision to a comic vision is part of the maturation process. When you're young you think everything is tragic, but as you get older you start to realize how comic it all is.

Yes, but, well, I have a child who's 11 years old and she would hate a film like *Laputa*.

That's healthy, I think.

(Laughter) Yes, I think so too. But she liked *Maneuvers*, except that she thought the film should end when he takes her in his arms. This is how she wants the world to be—that the young man takes the girl and that they are happy. That's the way children react to the world, and in a way they are right. We should be like them, we should ask the world to be nicer and to be a good home for us. But we're too wise and too mature!

Reviews

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover

Written and directed by Peter Greenaway. Photography: Sacha Vierny. Music: Michael Nyman. Producer: Kees Kasander. Miramax.

D. H. Lawrence once defined pornography as the confusion, due to anatomical proximity and cultural interdict, of the reproductive organs with the excretory organs. The scandal is that the confusion still reigns and conspires to give Peter Greenaway's brilliant film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* an X rating, summarily (and rightly) refused by Greenaway and Miramax, the film's American distributor. Still, the incredible good fortune of finding a Dutch patron/producer (Kees Kasander) willing to finance three film projects at a time and the scandal of the refused X rating (Godard's *Hail Mary* also benefited from such brouhaha) have combined to move Peter Greenaway from the margin, where he had already made five feature films, and catapult him into mainstream film consciousness, where he belonged all along.

The reviews thus far have predictably reduced the film to its most controversial moments (feces

and urination in the opening scene, nudity everywhere in the restaurant, vomiting, the fork in Patricia's cheek, the evisceration of Pup's belly button, the stuffing of Michael with book pages, the final meal and cannibalism) or distanced themselves from the film by citing Greenaway's diversity (author, painter, art historian), his taxonomical brilliance (games with numbers, alphabets, painterly tableaux, filmic *hommages*, literary allusions), his unconventional narratives, only to distance themselves further by categorizing him as mannerist, elitist, very British in his word play and puns, and, finally, too intellectual for the medium in which he works. The first type of review is a little like reducing Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* to the cutting of the eyeball or Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* to its one scene of anal sex. The second type of review reminds me of the same accusations (elitism, mannerism, formalism, chilly intellectualism) levied against the films of Eisenstein, Alain Resnais, Straub-Huillet. They survived such attacks, and so will Greenaway.

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover cannot be reduced to its controversial moments, to its surface narrative, which is but one element among many at play in the film, or to any sort of plot summary or character identification. Likewise, Greenaway has proved more erudite than any of his interviewers/reviewers (I won't be an exception here), who are challenged by the film's structure and seduced into playing the various "games" of alphabet, numerology, Greek myths, bestiaries, hidden paintings, and color codings. In fact, what I find most tantalizing about the film is that no one review or reading is adequate to the task. And what I admire in Greenaway is that, like Eisenstein and Resnais, he sees in cinema, not a confined medium for reworking formulaic narrative fictions, but a total work of art (cinema as art history, as canvas, as architecture, as stage, as opera). His interest in the films of Hollis Frampton, the music of John Cage, and Dutch landscape paintings attests to an eclectic mind, a cannibalistic appreciation of art forms (here a compliment), and a willingness to see in cinema a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art.

Names and Characters

The first names given to the characters in *The Cook . . .* are those of the actors originally intended to play the roles: Albert Spica (for Albert Finney), Georgina (for Georgina Hale), Michael (for Michael Gambon, who asked Greenaway for the part of Albert instead) and Richard (for Richard Bohringer). Helen Mirren was a third choice for Georgina (after Vanessa Redgrave), and Alan Howard eventually came to play the role of Michael. Finally, though, there is a protocol of naming at work in *The Cook*. Characters name other characters as though branding them, using the names obsessively and repetitively throughout the film. Albert calls his cook Richard, Richie, Ricky, Boarst—changing the names to taunt the cook, to strip him of his Frenchness and refinement. Boarst meanwhile says "Mr. Spica" at the end of every sentence directed to Albert; the formality of last name-calling is the cook's way of holding the gangster in utter contempt. Georgina warns Michael never to call her Georgie, and, while he rarely uses her name, except to thank Spica for giving the name to him, Georgina uses Michael's name obsessively once she learns it. Greenaway's earlier films also employ this obsessive name-calling, but in *The Cook* the device feels orchestral, swells to high theatricality, emphasizes the artificiality of the narrative. One could do a whole Derrida-deconstruction of the use of proper names in Greenaway films (following Derrida's discussion of proper names in *On Grammatology*, with special reference to Rousseau), but here I merely want to call attention to the way in which name-calling in *The Cook* is rarely referential or purely ornamental, but instead is antagonistic, obsessive, rhythmic, and finally, emblematic of the way language overall is used in the film: stating, restating, inverting, following assertions with inverted rhetorical questions (for example, Georgina's "I'm getting good at this, aren't I, Michael? Aren't I getting good at this? Michael, ar-

The Cook . . .

en't I getting good . . . ?''): language used as barb and taunt, as appetizer and hors d'oeuvre, as wrong never righted, as tort and retort, as stychomithia, quick repartee (sped-up Beckett or Pinter). Names, finally, are a form of synecdoche, part for whole, in *The Cook*, insisting metonymically (as opposed to metaphorically) upon contiguity and loss. They are no match for the alimentary camera, the avidity of images, the corporeality that runs to excess everywhere in the film.

Much has already been made of the pure evil of Spica, and yet this allegorization of Michael Gambon's performance does him a disservice in my reading of the film. Gambon's Spica is never tiresome, boring, or easily dismissed. If the opposite of despicable is admirable, then Gambon's Spica begs for a middle term, spicable, one who is admirably despicable, always other, irreducible, and not because he escapes labeling (his oral and anal fixations receive ample play in the film), but because he continues to use language like few other characters in recent film history. The Spica who speaks, who seems always at a loss but never at a loss for words, is he who enthralls us. His voice roars throughout the film, never modulated by spatial distance or wherever the camera might happen to be. This lion roars right up to the moment of his own extinction; in fact, it is his silence that makes the last scene so strange, accentuated by the gang of standing people confronting him; by the long body of the cooked Michael, whose penis is lined up with Spica's stomach; by the Michael Nyman theme of cello and violins, raised to an eerie ''contemporary'' crescendo with the addition of an alto sax, from a sumptuous classical sound to a strident jazz; and by the finally circular camera that moves around behind Spica, as though to take his point of view, but only in point of fact to take the bullet from Georgina's gun.

Gambon's performance, then, is the most noteworthy among the entire ensemble of great performances, which emphasizes a very rare experience for the spectator, that of no point of view. We can neither take Spica's point of view nor a comfortable point of view against him; nor can we inhabit any other character's point of view: not the cook's (too marginal, too kinky, and finally too voyeuristic) nor Michael's (too enigmatic, too unexplainably turned on and yet passive, and finally too dead) nor Georgina's, although her point of view is as close as we get to taking anyone's point of view, which amounts to character identification. The risky scenes, from Greenaway's point of view and his avowed refusal of character identification, are the last three, and in particular the long monologue in extreme close-up when Georgina tells her ''story'' to the dead Michael. Her revenge and one-word epithet, ''cannibal,'' strip the previously told personal story of its depth. Her shouted ''cannibal'' aligns with the silent ''revolution'' on the bloody page she pulls out of Michael's mouth. The French Revolution, so dear to Michael, like the Jacobean revenge tragedy Georgina reenacts, ends in a senseless reign of terror, an annihilation uninhabitable beyond the moment of its perpetration. Georgina succeeds finally, not so much in making Albert eat the cooked flesh of her dead lover, but in making Albert eat his own words, which is to say, she reduces him to silence.

Richard and Michael, by contrast, are ''minor'' characters, the first and last terms of the litany title. They are more aligned than being the cook and the cooked. Both are extremely funny in their exposition and execution. Richard is always ruffled but dignified, all talk and absence, even as Michael is very present and mostly silent. Both are voyeurs, both are reactive, dependent upon the more dominant Albert and Georgina.

Camera

The uninhabitable point of view in *The Cook* is emphasized by the camera panning of Sacha Vierny. Once again, Alain Resnais is an important footnote. Vierny was Resnais's cameraman for many years, and now he seems to be an integral part of Greenaway's ensemble. The films of Resnais are acknowledged favorites of Greenaway, in particular *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) and *Muriel* (1963). *Marienbad*, in fact, has much the same theme and surface narrative as *The Cook*: an outsider comes to a baroque locale and initiates an affair with a married woman, only to arouse the suspicions and need for vengeance of the husband. Rumor has it that Greenaway showed *Last Year at Marienbad* to his cast and crew during the shooting of his *The Draughtman's Contract* (1982). And Greenaway has professed an admiration for Resnais's *Providence* as well, especially as it is one of the few other films to show characters in a toilet (Greenaway's allusion), but also as it has an admir-

ably despicable main character obsessed with both corporeality and language in Clive Langham (John Gielgud—who has all the speaking parts in Greenaway's currrent feature, *Prospero's Book*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*). But, beyond all this footnoting and elective affinity between the two film-makers and a shared cameraman, there is an essential difference. In Vierny's mobile camera for Resnais, whether it's the moody camera mounted on a car going through the nighttime streets of *Hiroshima mon amour* or the elaborate and elliptical 360° pans in *Last Year at Marienbad* (where the looker authorizing the vision behind the pan is suddenly inscribed as the looked-at within the pan) or the "surveillance" camera of Bernard in *Muriel*, the camera panning always devolves to a particular character's point of view or memory, often subjective and unreliable, but still a point of view, nevertheless. Vierny's camerawork for Greenaway, by contrast, almost never devolves to a character's point of view; instead, it insists upon spatial configurations rather than character temporality (since time and point of view are always aligned), it accentuates the artificiality and theatricality of Greenaway's narratives, and it is thus freed up from the constraints of following character and collapsing into point of view to do quite innovative things (like mobilize painterly tableaux and deal with issues of perspective in Dutch table paintings, as is the case in *The Cook*).

For all that freedom, Vierny's camera in *The Cook* does follow a structural pattern. Beginning with the play's curtains which authorize it, the camera pans laterally past scaffolding along a blue ramp with gold studs, showing the same simulacra each time: a partially obscured sign for La Concourse (a road) to read "course" (part of a meal); the neon sign "Luna," a simulacrum for moon as well as an allusion to Bertolucci's film about incest. At the delivery door to the restaurant, the camera centers to show the two food trucks and the various vehicles driven by Spica and his men, with many license plates, ranging from "NID" (nest) to "HEX." This stopping place for the camera is often obscured by the many dogs that run back and forth, in one instance so close that they create a black-frame cut. The camera pans left to right again through the kitchen, shown with a wide lens down-angled to revealed the high ceilings and a space big enough to house airplanes—a space much too large for a restaurant kitchen. The camera pauses during the panning to pick up signs again (the SPICA and BOARST names), the many tables for cutting, the "otherness" of all the sub-cooks and waiters (a Vermeer woman, a Dickens boy, a black, a Chinese, several people speaking Italian, a bare-chested butcher, a barber) and many more partially obscured or hidden places (a ladder walk-up, a draped room for poultry and game, another for bread and bakery products). In the kitchen the camera stops most often where Richard is or Pup is, following Richard's voice or Pup's sung homilies. As the camera moves into the restaurant proper, the panning is timed to coincide with the Michael Nyman themes on the soundtrack (Pup's homilies for the kitchen, Nyman's themes for the restaurant). The fourth wall does not exist, so the panning does not stop or go around; it merely continues, left to right, and, if it does not match up with character point of view, it does match up with the songs or themes. There is always a period of entry in the restaurant where the camera pans along tables of dead birds and poultry, fish on ice, whatever is sumptuously rotting in excess in the foreground, and the Franz Hals painting "The Banquet of the Officers of the St. George Civic Company" (1614) in the background. Sometimes, there are people from a wedding party, a shoulder wrap or yarmulke from a Jewish ritual, various couples seated at tables, but the camera "swallows" them up in its passage to the Spica table, always shown with part of the Hals painting visible, so that some of the men in the Hals painting (including a Spica look-alike) are always looking upon the Spica table. The scene is still depicted in wide-angle and showing more ceiling than floor, but here space is deceptive, because we don't know the true dimensions of the Hals painting; we rarely stop for any vantage point far enough away from the Spica table to convey true distance (one rare exception is when Georgina stops at Michael's table to look at his books, and we see both Albert and Richard looking at her, and the room seems enormous), and, finally, we don't ever get the true dimensions of the back wall until the last scene when that wall is the point of entry for Albert.

When the camera moves from right to left and pans again, this time leaving the restaurant, it often accentuates the event in the narrative (Spica dragging Georgina out to the kitchen, for example), by

pulling back and up, even as it moves faster than the characters, so that there is both a tension/dynamics of speed and an emotional distance from the characters. Panning left to right to follow the various sound elements or panning right to left to follow characters and exit scenes, these are the parameters of Vierny's mobile camera. There are two significant breaks with this pattern. The cuts between scenes are always the various menus for each succeeding day, and, about halfway through the film, after one of these menus as insert, the camera is already in the restaurant proper, and it follows the back of Richard who is walking the space between tables behind the longest of the Spica table configurations, the meal that includes Patricia with Corey and Terry Fitch and his entourage at the other end. Since the camera follows Richard, it is already beyond the Hals painting, and it prefigures the back wall for the first time. His path is that taken by Georgina and all of Albert's accusers in the last scene, which is the second significant break, following a blank menu announcing that the restaurant is closed for a private function.

In this last scene, the Vierny camera moves in a circular way, remindful of his many circular camera movements for Resnais, hinting at the possibility finally of a finitely located point of view, only to make it impossible—the point of view of the silenced Albert, he who has eaten the flesh of another, he who is shot as soon as the camera has succeeded in getting behind him for the first time in the film, so that what is revealed, then, is the tipped-over chair, the metonymy of Spica, and Georgina holding the gun. In the long list of Greenaway's taxonomical obsessions, this one is the equivalent of the camera violence of Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, when Dr. Murchison turns the gun barrel around on himself for a suicide, and the gun is pointed at the camera and spectator as a result.

Voyeurism

In Freud's elaboration of the various drives, the oral and anal stages of child development represent drives of demand, whereas the scopic and invocatory drives represent drives of desire. All four main characters in *The Cook* are arrested somewhere between the two kinds of drives, Albert most notably at the oral and anal stages, and their various arrested developments provide the basis for their obsessive-compulsive behaviors and one revenge leading to another. That they are arrested and therefore pathetic is an additional way of saying that there is no point of view for the spectator to inhabit. And their pathos is mitigated by Greenaway in the way he renders them comic in their caught places. Albert, when he is not slugging Georgina in the stomach or attacking Pup at the belly button or otherwise attacking all the other characters at the digestive tract, is quite comic in the way he plays out his anal fixations: following Georgina into the ladies' room, attacking a gentleman at a urinal, telling Michael to go "stand in the corner like a naughty little boy," telling William and his party "you're going to have to eat in the kitchen like naughty little children," asking Georgina which hand she wiped with.

At a more sophisticated level, all of the vicissitude pairings from Freud are played out in *The Cook*: voyeurism-exhibitionism, sadism-masochism, and coprophilia (playing with feces)-coprolalia (dirty language). What is true of all these pairings is that one needs the other for full enactment: the voyeur needs an exhibitionist, the sadist needs a masochist, and so forth. Also one component is dominant, the other recessive, so that the weaker, turned in upon itself, includes the stronger: the exhibitionist, turned inward, is a form of voyeurism upon the self, an auto-eroticism. The masochist, likewise, can be seen as a sadist onto himself/herself. Many of these pairings play out in comic ways in *The Cook*. Georgina shows Michael how to hold her breast before they go to have sex in the ladies' room. Albert comes to watch Georgina in the bathroom (his various attempts at voyeurism, except at home, are always interrupted and unsuccessful). But he puts his hand on Georgina's breast in exactly the same way that she had put Michael's hand, even as Michael watches from the bathroom stall. And, after their love affair has advanced to include most of the rooms off the kitchen, Michael asks Georgina if they couldn't meet somewhere else, and she responds: "No. It's impossible. Better do it right under his nose . . . between courses . . ." Albert, for his part, emphasizes the voyeurism, telling Grace to "go look out a window or something" and telling Georgina she has a bladder "like a leaky mirror." And when Michael is dead, Georgina comes to Richard for confirmation of a voyeuristic kind. "How can I know he loved me if there were no witnesses?" she asks. And he answers that he saw what she let him see. "How could I know

it was real unless someone was watching?" she says. And she seduces and cajoles him into telling his litany of things seen, his recitation made comic by his lack of experience (his realms of existence are cinema, his parents, his fantasies, and what he has seen Georgina do), his measured speech with heavy French accent, and his transformation of the sexual into the alimentary: "I saw you take his penis into your mouth," etc.

While Georgina is masochist to Albert's sadism and unwilling exhibitionist to his voyeurism, she uses Michael to turn the tables, making their love affair a sadism upon Albert's unsuspecting masochism and making their love affair an exhibitionism for Richard's voyeurism and for just about everyone else in the kitchen as well. How these various shifts in the vicissitude pairings play out without a stable and inhabitable point of view being taken comes back to the camera again, whose metonymic function, by what it shows and swallows up in contiguity, is to "complete" in overall filmic terms what the incomplete and arrested characters and surface narrative cannot complete.

The Paintings

The metaphoric function of the camera, by contrast, is to produce a vertical narrative (as opposed to a linear and horizontal narrative of camera pans) of painterly tableaux. These are too many to mention in exhaustive detail or analysis, but I will suggest a few: Masaccio's "The Expulsion of Adam and Eve" (the naked lovers in the maggot-infested food van); Andrea Del Castagno's "The Last Supper" (1436—the long supper table with Fitch and company); Antonello Da Messina's "St. Jerome in His Study" (1460—the book depository scene); Andrea Mantegna's "Dead Christ" (1500) and Rembrandt's "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman" (the view of the dead Michael from the feet up); Van Eyck's "Adam and Eve" (one tableau of the lovers); Rembrandt's "The Syndics of the Draper's Guild" (for one of the Spica suppers, where three of his men are standing behind the table); Vermeer's "The Cook" (1657—for one of the kitchen tableaux). Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Archimboldo get repeated *hommages*.

Beyond an intellectual's game of citational hide-and-seek is a serious attempt on Greenaway's part to use cinema to discuss problems of perspective and depth in painting, exemplified by his passionate interest in Dutch table paintings. Greenaway has said: "If you could turn a tabletop up, it would almost be the aspect ratio of wide-screen cinema."[1] To conceive of the theatrical screen as a tesselation of a Dutch table painting is innovative indeed.

Why, then, the one giant Franz Hals painting? For one thing, this painting represents the burgeoning bourgeoisie as a class in its depiction of these amateur archers of Haarlem, and Albert, for all his money and pretentions to "class," cannot escape his bourgeois bloodlines and habits. For another thing, Hals himself represents both Spica and what Spica might have been, had he been successful in his attempts to purchase class. Hals is depicted in art history books as an insatiable drinker, a dissolute and ungovernable hedonist, who caused the death of his first wife by beating her, then had ten children by a second wife.[2] The need to feed that many children forced Hals to be prolific. He was as prolific as Vermeer was spare and unprolific—a painter who adored his wife and used her as model and whose few paintings engendered an industry of forgeries, fake Vermeers, which is the sub-subject of Greenaway's *A Zed and Two Noughts*.

Language

Just as Vierny's camera is used both metaphorically and metonymically, so too the language in the film functions both ways. Greenaway himself has said: "Cannibalism can be easily used as a metaphor for the end of consumer society. After we've eaten everything else, we shall eat up one another."[3] This cannibalism is meant to be taken metaphorically, not literally, and this point is emphasized by Spica before the last scene when he tells Mitchell: "I didn't mean literally to chew his buttocks. I meant it metaphorically." The various puns in the film speak as well to the metaphoric pole of language: the obscured letters for Boarst forming both a soup and a borstal authority; the anagrammatic misplay of SPICA in ASPIC, both food and joke (for Albert is no dandy); Albert mispronouncing *poisson* by saying "poison"; Richard mispronouncing "palate" by saying "palette"; the punning on hoods and Robin Hood; the *coq au vin* becoming "cock" and "van", etc.

Probably the most famous example of metaphor is in Albert's transubstantiation of the wet bread, not into sacred host, but into prairie oysters: from prairie oysters to sheep's buttock to wet bread

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover

again, as a warning to Mitchell. This use of metaphor is why Mitchell mistakenly chews on Michael's buttock. Mitchell literalized the content of the metaphor (sheep's buttock) and missed the point of the trope altogether.

The most famous example of metonymy is in the move from cows consuming their body weight in water (to produce milk), to human milk and the rare delicacy that is, to Georgina's breasts (he feels her), to the announcement, without missing a beat in language, that she's not wearing a bra, to kids (goat's milk and kidding around) to not having them and wanting them, to having them later, and so forth. This is language off the top of Albert's tongue and including everything and anything around him.

The play of metaphor and metonymy is important in situating the various temporalities addressed by this film. What is English in this film is both Jacobean revenge tragedies and Margaret Thatcher's England; what is Dutch in the film is both the preponderance of gifted portrait painters and table painters as well as the name of the restaurant as well as an allusion to Kees Kasander and the Dutch connection Greenaway has established. What is French in this film is both the refinement of cuisine, aspired to but never reached, as well as the barbarism of the French Revolution and its ensuing reign of terror, exemplified by Michael's books and the various allusions at the book depository. The enjoining of the three countries, traditions, and lifestyles is thus both metaphoric and metonymic. Perhaps more simply put, it is ironic, which is to say it necessitates thinking dividedly, incorporating two things at once, two times at once (the most simplified form of this would be the pun, the most sophisticated form would be the metaphors and metonymies). Once again, that essential dividedness is another way of saying there is no one narrative, no one stable point of view to inhabit, no easy reading of the film.

Color Coding

The colors are coded in *The Cook*, which codification would normally imply a totality, but what they are turns out to be not at all the same as how they play (like having rules for a game of bridge and then playing out the various hands). The codification attests to metaphor; the various plays attest to metonymy. Of the coding, we can safely assert the following: blue for the car park, green for the kitchen, red for the restaurant, white for the toilet, yellow for the hospital, and gold for the book depository. And Greenaway in interviews has spoken of the metaphoric value of such colors

(colors denoting safety in China, Rimbaud's poem on colors, etc.).[4]

But the colors, when put into play, have all to do with misperceptions. The hospital, for example, is an elaborate joke in my reading, referring to Fitch talking about saving his ears and Spica responding by asking if he wants a floor show with mute nuns. (Which he literally gets.) The film opens with Albert accusing Georgina of wearing black. She says she's wearing blue. In fact, in the restaurant her dress is red, while in the white bathroom her dress goes to white, with black feathers (she looks like Delphine Seyrig in *Last Year at Marienbad*). This "play" is in contrast with the color coding in *Providence*, another Resnais film, in which the kitchen of Claude and Sonia is black and white, while the bedroom, sheets, wine, and everything associated with the authoring Clive Langham (Gielgud) is in red. The joke in Greenaway is that Michael is in brown in the restaurant as well as in the bathroom. And at the end of the film, after Richard has made a long speech about charging more for things that are black, because "eating black food is like consuming death," we might reasonably expect the cooked Michael to look a little blackened and charred. But no, he's still in brown. The other joke about the cooked Michael is that we get visual proof that he was not Jewish, for his penis is clearly uncircumcized.

In Greenaway's *A Zed and Two Noughts* the various denizens of the zoo came to represent both color codings and metaphors: the toucan and bird of paradise, with all their colors, as representations of life affirmed, while the zebra, with its black and white stripes, represented death and enigma; in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, the black-and-white drawings of Neville, versus the sumptuous colors of the things drawn, function the same way. But in *The Cook* it's as though Greenaway said to himself, well okay, I'll code the colors and that will deceive the lazy spectator into easy incorporation into the narrative, but then I'll sabotage the coding and play jokes and have my fun with them as well.

Sound

Michael Nyman has received deserved praise for the musical score for *The Cook* and he is now in demand (he wrote the score for *Monsieur Hire*). What fascinates me about the Nyman score is the way it reprises the same musical themes and motifs at the end of *Drowning By Numbers* and the whole of *A Zed and Two Noughts* at the same time that it extends them, ironizes them, represents both the pomp and theatricality of *The Cook* as well as the vibrancy and play of the restaurant scenes. Nyman's music is both the easiest register of intertextuality between Greenaway films and the most difficult element of the *mise-en-scène* to assimilate or explain adequately. There are the soft notes of the love scenes and the washing off of feces and maggots (remindful of Satie's "Trois Gymnopédies") as well as the simple to complex orchestration of cello and violin to finally include sex for the panning and ultimately circular camera. What I am saying is that to understand fully *The Cook* as film is to understand how Nyman's score and Vierny's camera play off each other, not what happens to Georgina and Michael and Albert.

Sound, like the various colors, is both coded and sabotaged, so that what it is on blueprint is not how it plays in final cut. Sound is so exaggerated at times that it calls attention to itself and away from narrative event. When Georgina lights her cigarette in the kitchen, the sound of the match being lit is so loud it competes with, and momentarily drowns out, the singing of Pup. Albert bursts through the doors from the kitchen and into the restaurant as though through the gates of Hades: loud, massive, overpowering, as though the kitchen, were we to figure the various parts of the restaurant as a human body, were the bowels. Pup's sung homily, because the Vierny pans past a stack of glasses forming a pyramid, reflects the jarring ring of those glasses, even before we see Pup. When Georgina goes off with Richard to the hospital to see Pup, Michael closes the gates to the book depository and locks them several ways, and the sound is too loud and jarring, ironically so, because all those gates and all that sound cannot prevent Albert and his men from getting in. The hospital is noteworthy for the absence of sound, just as, by contrast, the evisceration of Pup's belly button is not conveyed visually, although some people will swear they saw it, but rather by Pup's strident screams. Too much sound in an enclosed space or too little sound in a vast space, Greenaway confounds our expectation of the aural-visual ratio. And such a thwarting of our spectator expectations is yet one more way of keeping us between, keeping us off-guard and ill at ease, keeping us from inhabiting a stable point of view.

The success (scandal) of *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* means, by way of proliferated information and anecdotes (as though we're now ready to consume so much Greenaway as to cannibalize him) that we already know that he intends *The Cook* to be the first of a trilogy of films, yet to include *Love Among the Ruins* (his confrontation with feminism, a retelling of Medea and eating her children) and *The Man Who Met Himself* (a study of narcissism: "It will be an essay in narcissism, our twentieth-century disease. I want to explore the idea that we're all born as twins and go through life looking for this other person.").[5] With Greenaway new projects are usually intertextual replays of old projects, so that *Love Among the Ruins* looks like an elaboration of the themes in *Drowning by Numbers* (to include the same actress who played the middle Cissie Colpitt) and *The Man Who Met Himself* looks like an elaboration of the themes in *A Zed and Two Noughts* (whose main characters were twins). The success of *The Cook* also means that we will likely get to see in America many, if not all, of his earlier films (consumerism's backward stretch). Either way, Greenaway is a film-maker to be reckoned with, someone so lucky in backing that he's not likely to be stopped and so erudite that he's not likely to be copied, an exciting one-of-a-kind. WILLIAM F. VAN WERT

Notes

1. Joel E. Siegel, "Greenaway By Numbers," *City Paper* (April 6, 1990).
2. See *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces*, ed. by Thomas Craven (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), pp. 118–119.
3. Siegel. See also Kathy Acker, "The Color of Myth," *Village Voice* (April 17, 1990).
4. Siegel, p. 21.
5. Siegel, p. 23.

The Fabulous Baker Boys

Script and direction by Steve Kloves. Photography: Michael Ballhaus. Music: Dave Grusin. Fox.

The Fabulous Baker Boys are a brother act, duo pianists, who've played low-rent ersatz-glamor dives in the Seattle area for fifteen years—places like the Starlight Lounge, where it's best to count what's in the pay envelope. (They're paid by a sleaze who reminds them they're not playing for niggers on the South Side.) Frank (Beau Bridges), who's forty-four, gets a little extra for managing the act, which he's well equipped for; married, responsible and square, he isn't eaten up alive by having to make nice to the people who hire them or having to sport a Hawaiian shirt for a gig. He even gets into the hushed, Las Vegas-y patter. Jack (Jeff Bridges) doesn't; he can barely get it up to appear on stage every night. He's been collaborating with his brother, as amateurs and professionals, for thirty-one of his thirty-eight years, and he's as fed up with Frank's meticulousness and anxiety and big-brother advice as he is with some of the wretched songs they have to play ("Feelings" is, Frank feels, an indispensable part of their repertoire). Jack copes by retreating—by staying detached, ironic, sealed off. But when he listens to the glittering arpeggios a wizardly young pianist gets off in his favorite after-hours jazz bar, he grows sick with envy and self-disgust, because he knows that's the kind of music he wanted to play before he got trapped in the lounge circuit.

The Fabulous Baker Boys, written and directed by Steve Kloves, is about what happens to the brothers' relationship when, because they've started to lose jobs to snazzier acts, Frank decides to hire a singer. Susie Diamond (Michelle Pfeiffer) is a tough cookie—she's been biding her time working for an escort agency—with a cannily concealed underlayer of childlike dreaminess, and when she sings, the combination heats up an audience. With her streaky blonde bangs and funky jewellery and red beret, Pfeiffer suggests the little-girl sensuality of a Rickie Lee Jones, and her tense, emotive singing style is midway between Greenwich Village, circa 1955, and Starlight Lounge. She's not a great singer, but she has a throaty, soulful contralto and she wears a lyric tight to her skin, like a zipped-up sleeping bag. The moment she starts to sing every man in the club (and in the movie audience) gets woozy and longs to fall into bed with her. She's a hotel-lounge wet dream. Not surprisingly, Susie views Frank with a certain incredulous amusement —she calls him "Egghead" and can't help spiking him sometimes, the way his brother must have stopped doing years ago, when he lost the energy for it—and she's temperamentally drawn to hip, laconic Jack. When Frank's son wrecks the car on New

The success (scandal) of *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* means, by way of proliferated information and anecdotes (as though we're now ready to consume so much Greenaway as to cannibalize him) that we already know that he intends *The Cook* to be the first of a trilogy of films, yet to include *Love Among the Ruins* (his confrontation with feminism, a retelling of Medea and eating her children) and *The Man Who Met Himself* (a study of narcissism: "It will be an essay in narcissism, our twentieth-century disease. I want to explore the idea that we're all born as twins and go through life looking for this other person.").[5] With Greenaway new projects are usually intertextual replays of old projects, so that *Love Among the Ruins* looks like an elaboration of the themes in *Drowning by Numbers* (to include the same actress who played the middle Cissie Colpitt) and *The Man Who Met Himself* looks like an elaboration of the themes in *A Zed and Two Noughts* (whose main characters were twins). The success of *The Cook* also means that we will likely get to see in America many, if not all, of his earlier films (consumerism's backward stretch). Either way, Greenaway is a film-maker to be reckoned with, someone so lucky in backing that he's not likely to be stopped and so erudite that he's not likely to be copied, an exciting one-of-a-kind. WILLIAM F. VAN WERT

Notes

1. Joel E. Siegel, "Greenaway By Numbers," *City Paper* (April 6, 1990).
2. See *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces*, ed. by Thomas Craven (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), pp. 118–119.
3. Siegel. See also Kathy Acker, "The Color of Myth," *Village Voice* (April 17, 1990).
4. Siegel, p. 21.
5. Siegel, p. 23.

The Fabulous Baker Boys

Script and direction by Steve Kloves. Photography: Michael Ballhaus. Music: Dave Grusin. Fox.

The Fabulous Baker Boys are a brother act, duo pianists, who've played low-rent ersatz-glamor dives in the Seattle area for fifteen years—places like the Starlight Lounge, where it's best to count what's in the pay envelope. (They're paid by a sleaze who reminds them they're not playing for niggers on the South Side.) Frank (Beau Bridges), who's forty-four, gets a little extra for managing the act, which he's well equipped for; married, responsible and square, he isn't eaten up alive by having to make nice to the people who hire them or having to sport a Hawaiian shirt for a gig. He even gets into the hushed, Las Vegas-y patter. Jack (Jeff Bridges) doesn't; he can barely get it up to appear on stage every night. He's been collaborating with his brother, as amateurs and professionals, for thirty-one of his thirty-eight years, and he's as fed up with Frank's meticulousness and anxiety and big-brother advice as he is with some of the wretched songs they have to play ("Feelings" is, Frank feels, an indispensable part of their repertoire). Jack copes by retreating—by staying detached, ironic, sealed off. But when he listens to the glittering arpeggios a wizardly young pianist gets off in his favorite after-hours jazz bar, he grows sick with envy and self-disgust, because he knows that's the kind of music he wanted to play before he got trapped in the lounge circuit.

The Fabulous Baker Boys, written and directed by Steve Kloves, is about what happens to the brothers' relationship when, because they've started to lose jobs to snazzier acts, Frank decides to hire a singer. Susie Diamond (Michelle Pfeiffer) is a tough cookie—she's been biding her time working for an escort agency—with a cannily concealed underlayer of childlike dreaminess, and when she sings, the combination heats up an audience. With her streaky blonde bangs and funky jewellery and red beret, Pfeiffer suggests the little-girl sensuality of a Rickie Lee Jones, and her tense, emotive singing style is midway between Greenwich Village, circa 1955, and Starlight Lounge. She's not a great singer, but she has a throaty, soulful contralto and she wears a lyric tight to her skin, like a zipped-up sleeping bag. The moment she starts to sing every man in the club (and in the movie audience) gets woozy and longs to fall into bed with her. She's a hotel-lounge wet dream. Not surprisingly, Susie views Frank with a certain incredulous amusement —she calls him "Egghead" and can't help spiking him sometimes, the way his brother must have stopped doing years ago, when he lost the energy for it—and she's temperamentally drawn to hip, laconic Jack. When Frank's son wrecks the car on New

Year's Eve and he's called home, the parental influence is removed, and Jack and Susie, inevitably, become lovers. (Frank, who's seen his kid brother float through a series of one-night stands for years, has warned Jack to keep his hands off Susie because he's worried that his inability to behave like a responsible adult will damage their professional relationship.) The love affair brings all of the semi-buried tensions between the brothers to the surface.

The set-up may be a cliche, but the movie isn't. Kloves is a romantic with an edge of self-consciousness, and that's where his three superb actors take up residence. The movie isn't smug or sneering, but it's aware of its romantic-comedy conventions (Kloves is very playful about them in the anticipation scene that follows Frank's New Year's Eve departure) and also its infatuation with blue moods, wee-hours wakefulness, which Kloves is extraordinarily good at evoking and which his cinematographer, Michael Ballhaus, graces with a grungy lyricism. Kloves has drawn Jack Baker out of that awareness. The way Jeff Bridges's Jack holds himself in check, refusing any kind of commitment, is actually an emotional indulgence—he gets to nurse his own loneliness, and though it makes him angry and restless (you can see that in one beautifully acted scene where he goes to pick up his dog at a pound), he's at home with it.

Kloves isn't an iconoclast, exactly, but he knows how to push the inside of the conventions he's working with so that they reveal something genuine—and surprising. When Jack and Susie begin to make love, they're on the stage of a deserted hotel ballroom; he unzips the top of her gown and, nuzzling her back, begins to play it gently, like an instrument. You can feel a thrill running through the audience—it's the kind of bliss a couple as incredibly sexy as Michelle Pfeiffer and Jeff Bridges can bring you to, the kind that makes you giggle at yourself a little. What you may not look for is the wit and sharpness of the morning-after scene: Susie, waking up and seeing Jack pulling on his trousers across the room, sensing his accustomed distance from a woman he's found in his bed, quips, "Look, I didn't expect you to go out and buy me a corsage this morning. . . . Your high school ring is safe." Kloves (with the brilliant collaboration of his two actors) does wonders with the disenchantment in this scene. And he's phenomenal at conveying fraternal tension, competitiveness,

The Fabulous Baker Boys

the difference between the kind of sparring that's sanctioned between brothers and the deep, bitter, O'Neillian kind of anger that such sparring can mask. When the Baker boys finally have it out, their rage triggered by a Mickey Mouse charity benefit Frank's landed them, where Jack brawled with the MC, they hurl awful accusations at each other, and we know that, on both sides, truth is being spoken. Jack tells Frank he's lost any dignity he ever had, Frank calls Jack self-indulgent and self-deceiving, and we can hear three decades of resentment in their squabbling. When the fight turns physical, Jack, getting the upper hand, bends over his brother (who's sprawled on the pavement) and twists his finger. Kloves isn't afraid to make Jack mean enough to go for what, in professional terms, is his brother's jugular, any more than he's afraid to show Frank spraying his bald spot with black paint before the brothers go on stage.

Jeff and Beau Bridges must have been waiting most of their lives for a chance at a scene like this one—especially Beau, whose career didn't go where it should have after his charming, youthful performances in *Gaily, Gaily* and *The Landlord*. Neither of them has ever been better. They've internalized their characters so completely that when you see the way Jack listens to Susie talking about the guys her escort service hooked her up with—how he shows us the soft stirrings of Jack's emotions just under the surface of his languor and sexual assurance—or the way Frank's permanently quizzical eyebrows rise when he sees the silent connection between Jack and Susie, you understand exactly how each of these men functions.

With its appealing collection of Michelle Pfeiffer numbers (she sings "More Than You Know," "Makin' Whoopee," "My Funny Valentine" and

others), *The Fabulous Baker Boys* could do with a better instrumental score than the one Dave Grusin's provided; it starts off with brio, but by the last half hour it's disintegrated into drippy sludge. And Kloves has included an obligatory scene in which Jack takes out his anger at his own inability to forge a relationship with Susie on Nina (Ellie Raab), the kid upstairs, and then has to run up onto the roof and make it up to her. Until then, the scenes between Nina and Jack—Nina hangs out in Jack's apartment whenever her mother brings home one of her boy friends—are pleasantly casual; Kloves is content to show us Jack's impulse for a more permanent connection with another human being without underlining it. He's an impressive new talent; he knows how to direct his actors to strike the perfect balance between glamor and grit, he can write dialogue that's both ticklish and stinging, he has fine timing, and he's remarkable at ambiance. When the picture's over, you want to go straight home and listen to every Sinatra record you've got. STEVE VINEBERG

Chocolat

Director: Claire Denis. Script: Denis and Jean-Pol Fargeau. Photography: Robert Alazraki. Editing: Claudine Merlin. Music: Abdullah Ibrahim. New Yorker Films.

Chocolat shows what happens to people when they cease regarding each other as such, and begin to use one another as agents of their desire for authority, protection, and love. Set in the French Cameroons during the 1950s, it is a political allegory as well. But director Claire Denis, upon whose memoirs the film is based, has made every symbol double-edged, every gesture ambiguous, every character a cauldron of contradictions. The film is as variegated and colorful, as teasing, teeming, and paradoxical, as nature itself.

A bland young woman named France (Mireille Perrier) returns to the remote outpost where she was brought up. She is given a lift by a transplanted American black. Her reverie during the ride comprises the body of the film. France's father, a colonial official named Marc (François Cluzat), leaves his handsome, intelligent black servant Protée (Isaach de Bankolé) in charge of his wife Aimée (Giulia Boschi), his child (Cécile Ducasse), and his bungalow while he goes off on a tour of duty. A failed plane provides the house with a chorus of colonists, and a fallen angel arrives in the form of a French hippie named Luc. The latter provokes a sexual confrontation between Aimée and Protée. When Protée refuses Aimée's advances, she has him cast out. He injures the child in retaliation.

An elemental drama as well as a domestic one, *Chocolat*'s themes emerge gradually from images of earth and fire, water and air. A still of the sea prefaces the movie. It is activated by the human eye of recall and affection. France becomes the camera, silent, observant, remembering. At the film's center, like the Adam of some older cosmography, is Protée. While the loss of innocence may be universal, Denis depicts the severity of Protée's betrayal, and the child's, as a consequence of Western dualism's mission to divide light from dark, mind from body, black from white in order to dominate and control.

The Western attitude toward nature in this film appears as skewed, morbid, denatured. The American black and his chocolate son, in the opening scene, let the waves caress them. Never do the whites take pleasure in the water that way. They contrive to shower indoors, thus depriving themselves of the best "salle de bain du monde," while the blacks are made to bathe in the open air. The detained pilot fears the seasonal rain will come and ruin his runway. The film ends with a jubilant downpour. To the Africans it is a part of life, perhaps a blessing. To the Europeans intent on going elsewhere, the rain is merely an inconvencience.

While the servants groom each other in the afternoon sun, the colonists hide from it in their bungalow or behind dark glasses. The hearth is in the servants' custody. Aimée does not even boil a cup of water. The Europeans think they have conquered the air. So great is their *hubris* that when the plane "falls into the mountain," as Protée and the child surmise, pilot and passengers are astounded that the thing should fail at all. The Westerners, including the domesticated American black named William J. Park, are hellbent on individual immortality. They are horrified that the earth will "swallow them up." (Aimée tends a graveyard, in which some German officers are interred, as carefully as she would a flowerbed.) Like the Germans, the colonists are losers in a war—this time against death. Their atti-

others), *The Fabulous Baker Boys* could do with a better instrumental score than the one Dave Grusin's provided; it starts off with brio, but by the last half hour it's disintegrated into drippy sludge. And Kloves has included an obligatory scene in which Jack takes out his anger at his own inability to forge a relationship with Susie on Nina (Ellie Raab), the kid upstairs, and then has to run up onto the roof and make it up to her. Until then, the scenes between Nina and Jack—Nina hangs out in Jack's apartment whenever her mother brings home one of her boy friends—are pleasantly casual; Kloves is content to show us Jack's impulse for a more permanent connection with another human being without underlining it. He's an impressive new talent; he knows how to direct his actors to strike the perfect balance between glamor and grit, he can write dialogue that's both ticklish and stinging, he has fine timing, and he's remarkable at ambiance. When the picture's over, you want to go straight home and listen to every Sinatra record you've got. STEVE VINEBERG

Chocolat

Director: Claire Denis. Script: Denis and Jean-Pol Fargeau. Photography: Robert Alazraki. Editing: Claudine Merlin. Music: Abdullah Ibrahim. New Yorker Films.

Chocolat shows what happens to people when they cease regarding each other as such, and begin to use one another as agents of their desire for authority, protection, and love. Set in the French Cameroons during the 1950s, it is a political allegory as well. But director Claire Denis, upon whose memoirs the film is based, has made every symbol double-edged, every gesture ambiguous, every character a cauldron of contradictions. The film is as variegated and colorful, as teasing, teeming, and paradoxical, as nature itself.

A bland young woman named France (Mireille Perrier) returns to the remote outpost where she was brought up. She is given a lift by a transplanted American black. Her reverie during the ride comprises the body of the film. France's father, a colonial official named Marc (François Cluzat), leaves his handsome, intelligent black servant Protée (Isaach de Bankolé) in charge of his wife Aimée (Giulia Boschi), his child (Cécile Ducasse), and his bungalow while he goes off on a tour of duty. A failed plane provides the house with a chorus of colonists, and a fallen angel arrives in the form of a French hippie named Luc. The latter provokes a sexual confrontation between Aimée and Protée. When Protée refuses Aimée's advances, she has him cast out. He injures the child in retaliation.

An elemental drama as well as a domestic one, *Chocolat*'s themes emerge gradually from images of earth and fire, water and air. A still of the sea prefaces the movie. It is activated by the human eye of recall and affection. France becomes the camera, silent, observant, remembering. At the film's center, like the Adam of some older cosmography, is Protée. While the loss of innocence may be universal, Denis depicts the severity of Protée's betrayal, and the child's, as a consequence of Western dualism's mission to divide light from dark, mind from body, black from white in order to dominate and control.

The Western attitude toward nature in this film appears as skewed, morbid, denatured. The American black and his chocolate son, in the opening scene, let the waves caress them. Never do the whites take pleasure in the water that way. They contrive to shower indoors, thus depriving themselves of the best "salle de bain du monde," while the blacks are made to bathe in the open air. The detained pilot fears the seasonal rain will come and ruin his runway. The film ends with a jubilant downpour. To the Africans it is a part of life, perhaps a blessing. To the Europeans intent on going elsewhere, the rain is merely an inconvencience.

While the servants groom each other in the afternoon sun, the colonists hide from it in their bungalow or behind dark glasses. The hearth is in the servants' custody. Aimée does not even boil a cup of water. The Europeans think they have conquered the air. So great is their *hubris* that when the plane "falls into the mountain," as Protée and the child surmise, pilot and passengers are astounded that the thing should fail at all. The Westerners, including the domesticated American black named William J. Park, are hellbent on individual immortality. They are horrified that the earth will "swallow them up." (Aimée tends a graveyard, in which some German officers are interred, as carefully as she would a flowerbed.) Like the Germans, the colonists are losers in a war—this time against death. Their atti-

tude towards earth is adversarial. Aimée in a fit of pique attacks the ground with a pickax. Protée by contrast uses a handful of dust to cleanse his hands.

The film insists that human life in truth resembles that of other parts of the creation, for example, insect life. Huts look like anthills. Blacks in single file at a distance, bundles on their heads, are indistinguishable one from another. Even the individualized characters form an ant-like column at the end. The colonists shudder at the thought of insects crowding a washbasin or colonizing their shoes. They ring their trees with ant poison, but Marc's pet name for France is "my little ant." The Europeans are either disgusted by nature or endow it with the charm of the diminutive.

Hyenas cackle, buzzards flap on a roof, a monkey scavenges under a table. These "sales bêtes" exist in the human order, too, but the colonists do not perceive them. The ironies are manifold here. "Chocolat" is routinely used in French to signify a color. But it is also a food. In this film Europe is feeding on Africa. The colonists would swallow Protée, emasculate him, turn him into housemaid or mammy. In one scene, the tiny France orders Protée to eat some porridge he has prepared for her meal. As she spoons it into his mouth, a drop falls on her arm. Protée licks it off. Her quizzical look indicates the peculiarity of the situation is not lost on her. Protée could just as easily have had her for supper. Natural affection, for one thing, keeps him from such easy prey. For another, he is not depicted as a predator. It is the Europeans who are the cannibals here.

Perhaps because the film is French, much attention is paid to who eats what, why, and where. A good deal of imagery has to do with the cooked and the raw. Aimée insists on "cuisine française, variée—des salades, des pâtes," as if she were living in Lyon. But the colonists disdain the very foods they command. When the cook tries to prepare what he thinks they want, his best efforts are ignored. "This meat is all spoiled!" he cries at one point. Indeed, that dish is as overcooked as colonial civilization itself. Therefore Luc offers Aimée half an avocado towards the film's climax. Africa is not Eden, the slain animals attest. But it is in sharing this raw fruit that Aimée loses her artificial and mendacious innocence.

In a scene clearly meant to shock a Western audience, Protée solemnly fixes France an ant sandwich. As second-class citizens, both have been riding in the back of a pick-up truck. The child's unquestioning acceptance of this Third World caviar signifies her acceptance of him. Later, France sits at table while Protée stands behind her with a towel draped over his arm. He is now her waiter. He pinches the wings off an insect he has captured, and eats it. "You are disgusting," says the child. "Sale nègre," Protée half agrees and half mocks. They do not share this meal. What they eat and how they eat serves to divide them.

The other amenities of civilization serve the same perpose. Authority is vested in whoever wears the robes, whether it is Aimée covering herself in a negligée, or the Moslem chief folding his privileged hands into a jallabah. Even the bungalow is decked out in the pennants of conquest: sky-blue curtains and blood-colored drapes. Protée is made to don a scarlet sash for a festive occasion. The British consul's tuxedo and the missionary's habit declare that *they* will not bow to the Africa climate. The cleric's organ is a relatively harmless, though bulky, manifestation of the same cultural imperialism. Rooms and drawers are minor fiefs. Aimée forbids Protée to enter her chamber, to touch her things. The consul, whose very name, Boothby, signifies division, makes his room an embassy by displaying an enormous portrait of Elizabeth II. The bungalow, attractive in its colonial way, frames a scenic view of a great phallic rock. Marc sketches the rock in his notebook, and seeks to contain its power there. The co-pilot takes a snapshot of the entire company before he departs. The Europeans

Chocolat

distance themselves from the present and try to control reality through art.

They also try to arrange people by color, gender, age, or class. This puzzles Protée. He does not quite understand why the black chief gets to shake Aimée's hand and stay for lunch, while he is ordered to take that lunch—a kid—on the hoof back to the kitchen. Luc, a "parasite," gains Aimée's bedroom while Protée, a trusted servant, is banned from it. The detested planter sits at table but, when company comes, the beloved child is told to make herself scarce. Racism, sexism, agism, and snobbery define the whites' interactions. Despite their perpetrators' inventiveness, however, these partitions are as flimsy as the shutters of the bungalow itself. It is only by collusion that they are kept. Nature abhors a wall.

Luc refuses to abide by the conventions the Europeans have raised, however. He showers and sleeps outdoors like a black, lounges in Aimée's boudoir, shares the servants' "chop," and, it is hinted, seduces both sexes. Sitting with the servants on their stoop, he tells Aimée that she, too, could be there, "rubbing up against" her Protée. The Africans, like the whites, are uncomfortable with him. He demonstrates that "keeping people in their place" depends upon collective pretense. Everyone knows, for example, that the planter's "housekeeper" is his mistress. The child and Protée try to confront him as he scavenges for leftovers for her in the kitchen. But the rest of the company colludes with the lie. Marc, speaking about the horizon, the line that vanishes as one approaches, says that it does not even exist. It only seems to be there. The same could be said of white power in Africa. The "boy" could just as easily slit Marc's throat as give him coffee.

The colonists live in their illusions, enabled by denial. They separate private from public, instinct from thought, will from desire. Marc, for example, is so engrossed in his own idealizations that he cannot see what is going on right under his Gallic nose. As Aimée remarks, he is "always taken in." His awkward body in Bermuda shorts—all the whites, as a servant says of Boothby, look better clothed—he is all head and no *cojones*. He is therefore out of touch with reality. He claims to love his wife, but does not satisfy her sexually. He offers the tribes patrols they neither want nor need. He sketches for his own pleasure while his black escort bakes in the sun. He considers himself humane, but, returning from his trip, he asks Protée about Aimée and France without greeting the man to whom he entrusted them. Marc asks another servant to listen to a song about a fellow who would give all of Paris for his "m'ami." Though he demands the retainer's attention, when the man asks what "m'ami" means, Marc will give him no explanation. "M'ami," he says, "C'est m'ami." Essentially, Marc is a man who is singing to himself.

His wife is also a stranger to her own motives. With her pouting, ripe femininity, she, too, is guilty of naiveté. "Reste avec moi!" she implores Protée at one point when she wishes, ostensibly, that he guard herself and her daughter in the bedroom against a prowling hyena. In another very tense scene, she beckons him to come and lace the stays of her ballgown. Their eyes meet in the mirror, but she instantly drops hers. She would indulge her impulses without taking responsibility for them. Aimée is a mistress of evasion.

None of the characters is all good or all bad. Luc, who walks up and down the earth like the adversary in the book of Job, stirs up trouble wherever he goes. The paradigm of inaction, loafer and mendicant, he speaks the truth that burns the others into action. In nature even a parasite is useful. Each of the minor figures displays some interesting idiosyncracy. The pilot fancies himself an aerial Lawrence of Arabia. His assistant spears a piece of Brie and declares that *he* is not observing Ramadan, as if this were a great victory for French culture. Even the boorish planter has an appealing energy. A braggart and a bully, his pungent ode to coffee—he calls what the uncomprehending cook has made "sock juice"—almost redeems him. The missionary and his forever-pregnant wife are endearingly out of this world. His wife ill, his livestock decimated, "Tout va bien," he murmurs, "It's the will of God." What unites these people is a grandiose self-absorption that blocks their vision. "Do *they* run things around here?" demands the bellicose planter. He has not noticed that it is *their* continent. The missionary tries to squeeze his church organ into the doorway of a tiny plane, he cannot see that this instrument will not fit that aperture any more than white ideology will pass through the eye of Africa.

Protée is fond of riddles. The film is full of riddles. Denis's black Africans seem more accepting

of the riddle at the heart of things. Protée stoops to pay his last respects to the missionary's slain animals. The elegant Moslem chief and his man genuflect before the setting sun. Even the bastardized towns, littered with gas-station debris and construction equipment, seem comfortable in the process of becoming bush again. They are not especially idealized. An aged chief with spindly arms, gaudy pink gums, and milky eyes is in a nauseating state of physical decrepitude. But he is respected by his tribe for his age, his wisdom, and his wounds. Decay is part of the flow the Europeans try to resist in their vanity. But the Africans seem free from the overblown distinctions of the European ego.

The Africans have a kind of fluency, in languages and other matters. The cook, speaking pidgin, exemplifies this in a comic way. Both he and Boothby are tribal creatures. The Englishman in a dressing gown wants his tea more than anything. The cook in his musselman's cap prepared what he knows by rote, that is, Beef Wellington and Yorkshire Pudding, over and over. Both have icons: Boothby the picture of his queen, and the cook the photos in a great tome of recipes which he cannot read but from which he draws "inspiration." Yet the cook elides certain barriers. He stands up to Aimée, for example, and accuses her of nagging him in the manner of his first wife. Boothby, who also speaks a kind of pidgin, crosses national lines, and would cross sexual ones: he has fallen in bed with Marc, and tries to seduce Aimée as well. Like the cook, he breaks down formal boundaries. Unlike the cook, he must get drunk to do so.

All the characters in *Chocolat* are in love with something: the landscape, aviation, even coffee. Between Aimée and Protée, however, there can be no love, only a fruitless attraction. Once again, apartheid—in this case, stratification—precludes it. Aimée moves up and down a ladder of degree. Even when she is literally lying down in bed she attempts to raise herself above Protée by direct order or the arrogant "tu" form of speech used for servants and children. But she feels she must lower herself to approach him sexually. She crouches on the floor like a child or the subservient mistress. At first he crouches, too, in order to stroke her cheek. Then he takes her brusquely by the arm. Getting up, he raises her to his level. There is anger as well as desire in his gesture. Love cannot exist between oppressed and oppressor.

Aimée learns nothing from this confrontation. In the morning she herself returns to a position of subordination, her head on Marc's knee. But what has happened is not lost on the child. *Chocolat* is about her education, among other things. At first she is shown as at one with Protée. He is mother, father, nurse to her; as a sort of tutor, he initiates her into the great mysteries. She is also thus at one with Africa. In one scene, in fact, when she violates the siesta, a maid cautions her to go inside. "Otherwise you will turn black, and then your father will scream." But she absorbs the values of her culture, and begins to look down on Protée and to view him as an extension of herself, the agent of her desires. Thus she appears in mini-pith helmet, most unmessianic on a donkey, to boss him around. As a child she is watchful, but she cannot move beyond the ideological bounds of her family. Only as an adult can she interpret the child's experience. France returns to Africa in order to complete her schooling.

Chocolat is about Protée's education, too, as individual and as African: watching, listening, waiting to move from servitude to independence. Restraint is his most salient characteristic. When taunted by Luc—"You are worse than the priests who raised you!" the Tempter cries—Protée does not thrash him but simply hurls him away into the darkness. He mans the generator. Though he sears the child with it at the end, the great wonder is that he does not blow up the premises. His impassiveness protects him, but it also prevents him from responding fully. His true self is hidden. It breaks through the self-imposed apartness of the victim sometimes, in his ironic laughter or in moments of tenderness when instructing the child. It breaks through more violently when Aimée orders him to draw her bath water, thus baiting him with an image of her naked body, after she has virtually kicked him out of the bedroom. When he catches a sight of the suds like a giant gob of spit in the drainpipe, his only recourse is to kick some pots, weep with rage, hit his arm against a wall: turn his hurt against himself.

"Nothing can be sole or whole/that has not been rent," wrote Yeats, who lived under a colonial regime. But rending is not pretty. After Protée rejects Aimée, she insinuates to Marc that Protée has made advances to her. She demands that Marc "put" Protée in the garage. Marc complies. The next frame shows Protée contemplating the Afri-

can vastness. If Marc and Aimée have betrayed him, the child will do the same. So he seems to be thinking. The audience is not allowed into his privacy. He then returns to the shed that houses the generator.

The child is waiting for him in a spot where he had previously shown solicitude by lifting her off the ground to keep the ticks from her feet. She asks him if the furnace burns. His face a mask, Protée places his hand firmly on the main pipe. She follows suit. In anguish and bewilderment, she stares at him. His hand, clawed in pain, reveals that he is in anguish, too. In disconnecting the generator this night, he disconnects himself from France, and walks away. Both will be branded for life. Betrayal is a part of growing up.

The film does not end with Protée's turned back, however. It returns to France and her driver. Withdrawn for most of the journey, she now invites him for a drink. He refuses. Figuratively, she has not shown him her hand. He takes the actual one and, reading her palm, declares she has neither past nor future. But Denis insists that the condition of estrangement is not limited to whites. A divorced man, "a pain to live with," William J. Park is perhaps as alienated—in Africa, on earth—as France. Moreover, her palm is not blank. It is scarred smooth. She has a past, and an identity. At the airport, she peers through blinds as the child she was peered through curtains. In Africa she must remain an observer. But perhaps being able to interpret her experience imaginatively, she smiles for the first time in the movie.

The film concludes with what she sees. On the runway a Cameroon Airlines plane is being loaded with native sculpture. The scene is an African-European co-production, like Ibrahim Abdullah's music, like the film itself. A team of young men, one of whom looks like Protée, works with great ease. Reclining in the back seat of a loading cart, the blacks ride no longer second-class but in a seat of earned privilege. The group gets up at the edge of a field to chat, laugh, smoke, pee. As the men light up, the rains begin. With a camaraderie the Europeans have never displayed, they put on bright yellow mackintoshes. These are merely ceremonial garments: the rain does not disturb them in the least. Work and play, nature and technology are integrated. The joyous music reels, soars, at their union. The blacks are now free men in an independent country, though we cannot be sure whether this is vision or reality. NIKKI STILLER

Book Reviews

Orson Welles
A Bio-Bibliography

By Bret Wood. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990. $39.95.

Issued without dust wrappers and priced beyond the range of most individuals, this 364-page books is clearly intended for libraries, and not likely to get much attention outside of specialized publications. But as a multifaceted research tool for anyone investigating the career of Orson Welles, it is a veritable godsend—more valuable in some ways than any of the Welles biographies published so far.

Not counting introduction, endnotes, index, a skeletal Welles chronology, an invaluable section devoted to special sources, and ten well-chosen illustrations, the book is divided into eight sections: Biographical Sketch, Theatre Credits, Radio Credits, Film Credits, Welles as Author, Discography (a brief section that regrettably excludes commercial releases of radio broadcasts), Books and Monographs on Welles, and Articles on Welles. Probably the most valuable of these sections in terms of fresh material are the two longest, Radio Credits (74 pages) and Film Credits (120 pages), containing not only listings but, in many cases, descriptive and critical annotations. (The length of the film section can largely be accounted for by the fact that Wood is as attentive to unrealized projects as he is to finished works, and it is chiefly his accounts of the former that make this section so useful.)

I don't mean to suggest that Wood's research skills are infallible or that his book doesn't contain its share of typos, syntactical ambiguities, factual errors, and glaring omissions. But given the difficulty and intricacy of Welles's career as an object of study, he has generally acquitted himself admira-

can vastness. If Marc and Aimée have betrayed him, the child will do the same. So he seems to be thinking. The audience is not allowed into his privacy. He then returns to the shed that houses the generator.

The child is waiting for him in a spot where he had previously shown solicitude by lifting her off the ground to keep the ticks from her feet. She asks him if the furnace burns. His face a mask, Protée places his hand firmly on the main pipe. She follows suit. In anguish and bewilderment, she stares at him. His hand, clawed in pain, reveals that he is in anguish, too. In disconnecting the generator this night, he disconnects himself from France, and walks away. Both will be branded for life. Betrayal is a part of growing up.

The film does not end with Protée's turned back, however. It returns to France and her driver. Withdrawn for most of the journey, she now invites him for a drink. He refuses. Figuratively, she has not shown him her hand. He takes the actual one and, reading her palm, declares she has neither past nor future. But Denis insists that the condition of estrangement is not limited to whites. A divorced man, "a pain to live with," William J. Park is perhaps as alienated—in Africa, on earth—as France. Moreover, her palm is not blank. It is scarred smooth. She has a past, and an identity. At the airport, she peers through blinds as the child she was peered through curtains. In Africa she must remain an observer. But perhaps being able to interpret her experience imaginatively, she smiles for the first time in the movie.

The film concludes with what she sees. On the runway a Cameroon Airlines plane is being loaded with native sculpture. The scene is an African-European co-production, like Ibrahim Abdullah's music, like the film itself. A team of young men, one of whom looks like Protée, works with great ease. Reclining in the back seat of a loading cart, the blacks ride no longer second-class but in a seat of earned privilege. The group gets up at the edge of a field to chat, laugh, smoke, pee. As the men light up, the rains begin. With a camaraderie the Europeans have never displayed, they put on bright yellow mackintoshes. These are merely ceremonial garments: the rain does not disturb them in the least. Work and play, nature and technology are integrated. The joyous music reels, soars, at their union. The blacks are now free men in an independent country, though we cannot be sure whether this is vision or reality. NIKKI STILLER

Book Reviews

Orson Welles
A Bio-Bibliography

By Bret Wood. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990. $39.95.

Issued without dust wrappers and priced beyond the range of most individuals, this 364-page books is clearly intended for libraries, and not likely to get much attention outside of specialized publications. But as a multifaceted research tool for anyone investigating the career of Orson Welles, it is a veritable godsend—more valuable in some ways than any of the Welles biographies published so far.

Not counting introduction, endnotes, index, a skeletal Welles chronology, an invaluable section devoted to special sources, and ten well-chosen illustrations, the book is divided into eight sections: Biographical Sketch, Theatre Credits, Radio Credits, Film Credits, Welles as Author, Discography (a brief section that regrettably excludes commercial releases of radio broadcasts), Books and Monographs on Welles, and Articles on Welles. Probably the most valuable of these sections in terms of fresh material are the two longest, Radio Credits (74 pages) and Film Credits (120 pages), containing not only listings but, in many cases, descriptive and critical annotations. (The length of the film section can largely be accounted for by the fact that Wood is as attentive to unrealized projects as he is to finished works, and it is chiefly his accounts of the former that make this section so useful.)

I don't mean to suggest that Wood's research skills are infallible or that his book doesn't contain its share of typos, syntactical ambiguities, factual errors, and glaring omissions. But given the difficulty and intricacy of Welles's career as an object of study, he has generally acquitted himself admira-

bly, and he has had the good sense to concentrate largely on areas that most other Welles scholars have neglected—particularly the bulk of the radio work and such lesser-known film projects as *Don't Catch Me, Carmen*, and *Salome*.

Regarding Welles's radio work, he offers the first thing that even remotely approaches a comprehensive account, with a keen sensitivity to how that work relates to Welles's work in both film and theater. Apart from a few patches in John Houseman's *Run-Through* and Frank Brady's fascinating but unreliable *Citizen Welles*, virtually all of Welles's chroniclers and critics have paid only glancing lip-service to this vast, undiscovered continent in Welles's oeuvre. Although many people still believe that Welles's film career essentially began and ended with *Citizen Kane*, there are surely even more who assume that his radio career began and ended with *The War of the Worlds*. Considering the fact that Welles did hundreds of radio broadcasts, educated and detailed commentary on this work has been by far the most gaping lacuna in Welles studies.

Wood has listened to all of Welles's groundbreaking, seven-part adaptation of *Les Miserables* in 1937, can pinpoint many of the individual highlights of *First Person Singular* and *Mercury Theatre on the Air* (1938), *The Campbell Playhouse* (1938–1940) and subsequent shows through the later forties, and is able to trace (for instance) the style and format of *The Orson Welles Almanac* in 1944 back to Welles's several appearances on Jack Benny's show in 1943. He clearly qualifies as the first serious scholar to write at any length about these matters. While one can differ with some of his individual judgements—I happen to rank Welles's controversial and political 1941 radio play *His Honor, the Mayor* much higher than he does, largely because of Welles's remarkable neo-Brechtian narration—there's no question that Wood dwarfs all his predecessors in his detailed assessments of Welles's radio work.

The bibliographical sections, on the other hand, while they contain many entries that were unfamiliar to me, are as notable in some ways for what they leave out as for what they include. Although Wood neglects to mention this, his list of books and monographs completely excludes non-English works, and most other items are also in English. The principles for inclusion often seem curious and haphazard: two pieces in *Confidential* about Welles's love life are cited, but neither of the two prominent manifestos by Welles and Houseman about the Mercury Theater that appeared in the *New York Times*; and even Peter Bogdanovich's celebrated "The *Kane* Mutiny"—published in *Esquire* and reprinted in a volume Wood cites elsewhere—goes unmentioned.

Wood fails to note that Fletcher Markle was the credited author of the *Salome* treatment he discusses and incorrectly states that Welles's TV documentary about Gina Lollobrigida was "never completed" (when it was both discovered and shown in its entirety at the Venice Film Festival a few years ago). Many of these and other errors or omissions can be traced back to printed sources elsewhere—a recurring problem that is especially acute when it comes to Wellesian matters—although it also suggests that some matters received much more of Wood's attention than others. (Curiously, he seems completely unaware of the bulk of Welles's work for European TV—including such series as *Orson Welles Sketchbook, Around the World With Orson Welles*, and *In the Land of Don Quixote*.) But these are only niggling reservations about an indispensable resource for all Welles scholars.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

Directed by Vincente Minnelli

By Stephen Harvey. New York: Harper and Row, 1989. $29.95

"Ah!" casual readers might say, leafing through this handsomely mounted volume, full of glossy photographs of the director's glossy photoplays: "A coffee table book on a coffee table director." And, given the evidence of this volume they'd be right. Stephen Harvey tries for more, an appreciation of Minnelli as an film artist, but comes up short in ways that aren't all his fault. Like his subject, Stephen Harvey is frequently a witty stylist; Minnelli's movies are pleasures to watch and Harvey is a pleasure to read. As in his previous book on screwball comedy one feels Harvey likes what he's writing about; but as in that book one also feels Harvey isn't willing to dig more deeply into the sources of his pleasures.

bly, and he has had the good sense to concentrate largely on areas that most other Welles scholars have neglected—particularly the bulk of the radio work and such lesser-known film projects as *Don't Catch Me, Carmen*, and *Salome*.

Regarding Welles's radio work, he offers the first thing that even remotely approaches a comprehensive account, with a keen sensitivity to how that work relates to Welles's work in both film and theater. Apart from a few patches in John Houseman's *Run-Through* and Frank Brady's fascinating but unreliable *Citizen Welles*, virtually all of Welles's chroniclers and critics have paid only glancing lip-service to this vast, undiscovered continent in Welles's oeuvre. Although many people still believe that Welles's film career essentially began and ended with *Citizen Kane*, there are surely even more who assume that his radio career began and ended with *The War of the Worlds*. Considering the fact that Welles did hundreds of radio broadcasts, educated and detailed commentary on this work has been by far the most gaping lacuna in Welles studies.

Wood has listened to all of Welles's groundbreaking, seven-part adaptation of *Les Miserables* in 1937, can pinpoint many of the individual highlights of *First Person Singular* and *Mercury Theatre on the Air* (1938), *The Campbell Playhouse* (1938–1940) and subsequent shows through the later forties, and is able to trace (for instance) the style and format of *The Orson Welles Almanac* in 1944 back to Welles's several appearances on Jack Benny's show in 1943. He clearly qualifies as the first serious scholar to write at any length about these matters. While one can differ with some of his individual judgements—I happen to rank Welles's controversial and political 1941 radio play *His Honor, the Mayor* much higher than he does, largely because of Welles's remarkable neo-Brechtian narration—there's no question that Wood dwarfs all his predecessors in his detailed assessments of Welles's radio work.

The bibliographical sections, on the other hand, while they contain many entries that were unfamiliar to me, are as notable in some ways for what they leave out as for what they include. Although Wood neglects to mention this, his list of books and monographs completely excludes non-English works, and most other items are also in English. The principles for inclusion often seem curious and haphazard: two pieces in *Confidential* about Welles's love life are cited, but neither of the two prominent manifestos by Welles and Houseman about the Mercury Theater that appeared in the *New York Times*; and even Peter Bogdanovich's celebrated "The *Kane* Mutiny"—published in *Esquire* and reprinted in a volume Wood cites elsewhere—goes unmentioned.

Wood fails to note that Fletcher Markle was the credited author of the *Salome* treatment he discusses and incorrectly states that Welles's TV documentary about Gina Lollobrigida was "never completed" (when it was both discovered and shown in its entirety at the Venice Film Festival a few years ago). Many of these and other errors or omissions can be traced back to printed sources elsewhere—a recurring problem that is especially acute when it comes to Wellesian matters—although it also suggests that some matters received much more of Wood's attention than others. (Curiously, he seems completely unaware of the bulk of Welles's work for European TV—including such series as *Orson Welles Sketchbook, Around the World With Orson Welles*, and *In the Land of Don Quixote*.) But these are only niggling reservations about an indispensable resource for all Welles scholars.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

Directed by Vincente Minnelli

By Stephen Harvey. New York: Harper and Row, 1989. $29.95

"Ah!" casual readers might say, leafing through this handsomely mounted volume, full of glossy photographs of the director's glossy photoplays: "A coffee table book on a coffee table director." And, given the evidence of this volume they'd be right. Stephen Harvey tries for more, an appreciation of Minnelli as an film artist, but comes up short in ways that aren't all his fault. Like his subject, Stephen Harvey is frequently a witty stylist; Minnelli's movies are pleasures to watch and Harvey is a pleasure to read. As in his previous book on screwball comedy one feels Harvey likes what he's writing about; but as in that book one also feels Harvey isn't willing to dig more deeply into the sources of his pleasures.

Minnelli, as Harvey points out in his introduction, is a paradox, a stylist at Hollywood's crassest, most conformist studio (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer); an individualist who thrived, essentially, at that one studio alone (thirty films in twenty years). He was a driven workaholic whose films celebrated artistic dreamers. He was also, although this is underplayed, a liberal in a conservative time (*Tea and Sympathy* and *Designing Woman* both contain anti-McCarthy, anti-witchhunt speeches; couched, significantly enough, in terms of sexual identity, not politics).

Harvey does a good job at illuminating these contradictions and, up to a point, a good job as well in showing how they developed and how Minnelli changed over the years. Granted access to MGM's production files, Harvey is able to integrate the films' production history with nimble discussions of the films themselves. He's good at this; he's particularly good on analyzing the contributions of Minnelli's performers: Kelly's fixed grin, Kirk Douglas's "aggressive wheedle" as Van Gogh in *Lust for Life*. He's alert to the importance of certain key films, both in and of themselves and in terms of Minnelli's development; thus not only do the great musicals (particularly *The Band Wagon*) and *Lust for Life* get their due, but so does a crucial film like *Madame Bovary*, Minnelli's transition from the relatively sunny films of the 1940s to the often nightmarish works of the '50s.

Unfortunately, in Harvey's eyes Minnelli stopped making good films in 1960. As Minnelli's problematic, but undeniably personal, works of the following decade fail to move him, he waxes sarcastic. He sees them as evidence of decline rather than as the late work of an aging master, a respect accorded the final films of, say, Ford or Hitchcock by their acolytes. Even if you're not a fan, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* seems every bit as worthy of respect as *Cheyenne Autumn*, and you can learn as much about Minnelli's sexual politics from the easy-to-despise *Goodbye Charlie* as you can about Hitchcock's from *Frenzy*. (Harvey does approach Minnelli's last two films, *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* and *A Matter of Time*, on a more elegaic note, although here, as frequently throughout the book, the tone is gently condescending.)

Harvey divides Minnelli's films into three groupings—musicals, comedies, and melodramas—and discusses the films chronologically within these genres. The reader gains little insight into the films from this. Harvey has little to say about the genres as genres, so the question of how Minnelli affected them and how he was affected by them—which would justify the division—goes by the board. The continual jumping back in time at the beginning of each new section, moreover, muddies one of Harvey's strongest assets, his well-essayed contextualizations of the director within the studio politics of his time. Three times do production heads Louis B. Mayer, Dore Schary, and Sol C. Siegal wax and wane in the background. One time each was more than sufficient!

As Harvey's book may well be the standard book on Minnelli for some time to come, one can be grateful that it is as good as it is. I repeat that it is witty and intelligent. If one wanted to make a case that Minnelli was an important director this volume might do. (It's amazing that this is the first full-scale book on him.) One feels ungrateful in asking for more, but more is what is needed. An index would be nice. Harvey could have used his access to the MGM files a little more aggressively. What, for example, were the scenes cut, over Minnelli's violent objections, from *The Cobweb*? I've long suspected, based on certain characteristic camera movements, that Minnelli directed more of *The Story of Three Loves* than just the "Mademoiselle" episode; if Harvey had been alert to this, he could have told us, through research, if Minnelli did indeed do some reshooting for Gottfried Reinhardt, the director of record. As it stands these questions remain open. (Harvey does, however, establish Minnelli's real given names and actual birthdate—Lester Anthony, February 28, 1903—which is a first. Minnelli claimed to have forgotten the latter and never mentioned the former. Lester?!?)

Just as Harvey did not take full advantage of his access to MGM, he muffs the opportunity of a lavish book production budget by filling his two sections of color frame blowups from the films with shots he happens to like. Minnelli was a colorist of major importance and any full-scale study of him has to address his deployment of Technicolor and what Harvey calls Minnelli's "Anscocolor brushwork" (on *Lust for Life*) seriously. Throughout the book Harvey talks a lot about "Minnelli red," and yes, a lot of people are wearing red in the stills we see, but is there a pattern there? Ten years

ago Bernard Timberg addressed this question in a piece ("Minnellian Nightmare: Meaning in Color") in the unfortunately shortlived *Film/Psychology Review*, but Harvey never seems to have heard of it. And Timberg addressed only red and white. What of "lemon yellow, sulphur yellow, greenish yellow"?—to quote Minnelli's alter ego Van Gogh. A glorious opportunity to use the resources of a major publisher and fully display what Harvey calls 'Minnelli's palette" is lost.

A final criticism would address Harvey's failure to read the films, as films, closely enough. Harvey frequently makes casual but astute comments on Minnelli's camera movements and their functions. Closer attention yet would have paid exponential dividends. Take for example his commentary on *The Cobweb*: "The tentative illicit romance between Widmark and Bacall unreels in a siege of long one-take talkathons, with Minnelli waiting idly for his actors to shut up so he can move the camera again. His restlessness shows through in the oddest moments; a flamboyant boom shot of Bacall's house at night is inserted for no discernible reason save that, amid so much verbal intrigue, he hasn't had the chance to stretch his legs for reels at a time." A look at the scene in question, however, reveals that whatever one thinks of the poignantly tender dialogue between Lauren Bacall's widow and Richard Widmark's frustrated husband, the "flamboyant boom shot" that follows has a very obvious reason to be; it serves to almost guide the couple out of their car and up the stairs to her loft, and is in no way frivolous.

To a degree all of this—the witty casualness of Harvey's prose, his indulgence of bric-a-brac like *The Reluctant Debutante*, his condescension toward Minnelli's more ambitious works, the lack of close reading, the book's status as pricey art object rather than accessible study tool—stems from, in part, the economics of the film book market. The book is not targeted to academia, which might reject it as not serious enough even if its obvious errors were rectified. Harvey seems to be writing for an audience much like himself—the educated lay reader, or film buff, if you will. In a sense Harvey's book marks the great divide between academic and popular film criticism as it stands today. Up through the later 1970s intelligent, usually auteur-oriented, film criticism appeared in popular journals (I'm thinking particularly of *Film Comment* before its format change in 1976) but since then such magazines have become, usually, mere outlets for studio PR. (A book like Harvey's looks like PR as well, in this case for Ted Turner's new holdings, even if it doesn't read that way.) Meanwhile, most academic journals, after the *Cahiers-Screen* revolutions of 1968–70, lost any interest in writing for the intelligent lay reader.

A book like Harvey's, with its glossy format and commonsensical director-as-artist approach, lends itself to instant dismissal by the academy, which would be unfair. If, here, I emphasize Harvey's lack of rigor, it's because his book is under review, and not an academic text of inpenetrable prose and dubious, cloudily grounded assertions. Academics could learn from a critic like Harvey, just as Harvey could have learned quite a bit by studying any of the several important pieces on Minnelli written over the past three decades, all of which he ignores, both in text and notes. I've mentioned Bernard Timberg's piece on color. What of Barry Boys on *The Courtship of Eddie's Father* (from the early *Movie*), Thomas Elsaesser's seminal "Vincente Minnelli" (from the *Brighton Film Review* of 1969–70), Dennis Giles's "Show-making" (from *Movie* of 1977), or Robin Wood on *Madame Bovary* (*CineAction!*, 1986)? (The latter piece takes explicit aim at Harvey's expressed opinion on the film; it's a valuable piece nonetheless.) I've long found Giles's piece, or the argument advanced by Andrew Britton and Robin Wood that *Meet Me in St. Louis* is a prequel to *Night of the Living Dead*, very problematic, but addressing their Freud-driven pieces might have forced Harvey to better define Minnelli's unusual "proto-feminism," Freud's influence on Minnelli (arguably vital), and the role of gender in Minnelli's work generally. All of these issues seem central to any future study of him. The point, again, is not that all these different pieces are correct, or even that they comprise a discourse superior to Harvey's, but that film theory's practitioners, and popular film writers like Stephen Harvey, have nothing to lose and a lot to gain from paying attention to each other. GREGG RICKMAN

Monsters and Mad Scientists

A Cultural History of the Horror Movie

By Andrew Tudor. Oxford, England, and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Andrew Tudor spent over ten years on this study of the horror movie, working out "a systematic approach to analysing popular film" that would be able "to incorporate as much as possible of the potential variation in 'readings' that an audience might make of a cultural object." The desire to create a "cultural history" set him on the path of just what it was, or might have been, that struck audiences as the key or frightening elements of particular horror movies, subgenres, and cycles. The result is a defensible taxonomy of the genre (yielding the knowledge narrative, the invasion narrative, and the metamorphosis narrative, with lots of subcategories), a series of significant, well laid-out bar charts and graphs tracing the rise, decline, and recurrence of certain elements of the films—mutations, internal vs. external threats, mad relatives, etc.—over many decades, and a stimulating, thoughtful commentary on some of the movies and all of the statistics. Statistics and tables do make up a large portion of this book.

As one who takes horror movies seriously, I get profoundly ticked off at "scholars" (referring not to Tudor but to writers who merely clutter up the files) who dismiss or describe films without taking the trouble to watch them, let alone verify their titles; who blithely define *Psycho* as "the first slasher movie" without considering everything from *Caligari* and *M* to *Peeping Tom*; who assume the films are ridiculous; who make nasty assumptions about their audiences; or who do their own slasher number via the Procrustean bed of their favorite theoretical grudge, chopping complex and revealingly troubling, risk-taking works off at the neck, so that they appear mindless, and then at the shins, so they can't get anywhere. It should not be a secret, but apparently is, that as an officially despised and generally low-budget phenomenon, the horror film is free to be politically subversive, psychologically daring, and artistically outrageous; that one can go to a Cronenberg or Craven or Cohen or Carpenter movie—and that's only the *C*s!—and realiably expect to see a living example of film art with a joltingly uncompromised message (was there, in the Reaganland of the eighties, any American film more political than *They Live*?); that, in short, the horror film is where it's at, particularly in a period when the official screen is full of the truly formulaic (from the well-meaning *Glory* to the cynical *Another 48 HRS.*) and ridiculous (the Grail Knight lets the Holy Grail fall through a gash in the floor so that Indiana Jones can make a big exit).

I was not, then, willing to cut Tudor any slack on my favorite subject, not willing to pass over any error or casually dismissive judgment, and I read the book in that formidably critical mood. So it was a gratifying surprise to discover, to take only one example, Tudor's first-class, on-target, well informed comparison of *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom* (pp. 192–95). The book has minimal visual analysis and no pictures, only graphs and tables, but it is still the work of someone who has thought long and hard about a great many horror films and what audiences appear to see in them. This is almost the perfect book for the person who's wondered why there's usually a hunchback in a Universal Frankenstein, or whether there were more films in the early 1980s about cannibalism, environmental pollution, or slashers ("almost" because cannibalism and hunchbacks are not adequately covered here). The person interested in the sociology of the horror film, or in the recurrence of certain plot or thematic elements over time, should find this book extremely valuable.

Unfortunately, Tudor appears to have been more careful about his database than about some of his data. When I finally read the book straight through, I was surprised at how good it was, since the first thing I had done, being pressed for time, was to look up the dating, description, and interpretation of Universal's Mummy films—a series I know particularly well, and so for me a rough index of reliability, like the definition of "zoom" in a film textbook or glossary—only to find the criticism thin and the errors thick. It seems foolhardy to accept on good faith the number crunching of a scholar who dates *The Mummy's Curse* 1946 and *The Mummy's Ghost* 1947, when *Ghost* was first released in June 1944 and *Curse* in March 1945. Tudor's research was based, as he says, "on 990 films distributed in Britain between 1931 and 1984," and he accordingly provides only British release dates—with no reference to completion dates nor to release dates in country of origin,

which would not have been all that distracting or difficult to include. But not even the use of British release dates could justify inverting the order of *Ghost* and *Curse* (in context, the list implies production order and narrative sequence), and nothing excuses the assertion that in all the Mummy films from 1932 to "1947" the Mummy's beloved is "conveniently reincarnated in the person of the female lead," not because the sentence is patronizing but because there is no such reincarnation in *The Mummy's Hand* or *The Mummy's Tomb*.

It's not unusual to find a slightly incorrect title or misleading date in this book, even when Tudor knows how important the films are, as in the case of "the hugely influential *Night of the Living Dead* (1970)" (to read this book, you have to fill in "first released in 1968" yourself and thus keep distinct, in this case, a trend in the culture that produced and first reacted to the film and a later trend in British response patterns) or *"The" Bride of Frankenstein* or *"The" Werewolf of London*, either of which could have been remedied by looking at a print. Some errors are introduced in the index (where the text correctly has *Chain Saw*, the index offers *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*), which has further problems in that it does not include many of the films and genre elements that are covered, however fleetingly, in the book. And to rise above the Gradgrind level, to speak not of facts but of critical insight and the appreciation of crucial works, I must add that I did not expect to learn much from an author who could drop in and out of both *White Zombie* and *I Walked With a Zombie* in half a sentence (on both pp. 101 and 166), or from a book that failed to include—to take obvious examples from both the high-art and schlock ends of the genre—important horror films from Dreyer's *Vampyr* to Lewis's *Blood Feast*. The latter may, of course, not have been released in England; nevertheless, it seems to me that Tudor's generalizations about the mad scientist, for one, would have been more comprehensive, accurate, and relevant to a study of that figure as a recurring element in the genre had he considered such possibly banned films as *Island of Lost Souls* (1932, US release 1933; he does the 1977 remake) and *The Maniac* (1934); ditto *Make Them Die Slowly* (1980) and the invasion narrative.

Taking the statistical tables with a good deal of compensation for transatlantic delay, it is interesting and useful to learn that the reliance on authorities for defense against the supernatural declined in 1975–84 relative to 1955–74, or that the "Types of pursuers in the horror movie, 1931–84" were "military" in 6% of the films, "scientists" in 11%, "experts" in 14%, "police" in 23%, and "everyperson" in 64% (which adds up to 118% because some films included more than one type of pursuer, just as *Dracula* teams up with expert Van Helsing with a group of amateurs).

Monsters and Mad Scientists is an occasionally brilliant book that reveals much about the horror film and about ways to study cultural history, even if the choice of films and culture is distinctly Anglo—you will not find *Kwaidan* here, although it was distributed in Britain—and even if it cannot be relied on as a reference book. If some of the movies that belong in however methodologically limited a history of the sound horror film are omitted here, or misread (so that some of their complexities, ambivalences, and ambiguities are overlooked), or put in what might strike the reader as the wrong category, or rushed over, it is still true that most of the movies discussed are treated intelligently and placed quite usefully in the context of the trends, developments, and secret concerns of popular culture, which themselves are, as Tudor demonstrates, particularly well illuminated by what people are afraid of, when and why they fear it, and what they hope they can do about it. BRUCE KAWIN

Elia Kazan: A Life

By Elia Kazan. New York: Knopf, 1988. $24.95

Despite the natural curiosity that might be expected from one who has spent more than two years studying the films and life of Kazan, it has taken me a long time to get around to reading this mammoth autobiography and even longer to write about it. Disappointed at not having deciphered the mystery of Kazan's character in my own book and discouraged by the alternately respectful and disdainful reviews when his long-awaited memoir first appeared, I thought I might ignore it completely. That would have been a big mistake. *Elia Kazan:*

which would not have been all that distracting or difficult to include. But not even the use of British release dates could justify inverting the order of *Ghost* and *Curse* (in context, the list implies production order and narrative sequence), and nothing excuses the assertion that in all the Mummy films from 1932 to "1947" the Mummy's beloved is "conveniently reincarnated in the person of the female lead," not because the sentence is patronizing but because there is no such reincarnation in *The Mummy's Hand* or *The Mummy's Tomb*.

It's not unusual to find a slightly incorrect title or misleading date in this book, even when Tudor knows how important the films are, as in the case of "the hugely influential *Night of the Living Dead* (1970)" (to read this book, you have to fill in "first released in 1968" yourself and thus keep distinct, in this case, a trend in the culture that produced and first reacted to the film and a later trend in British response patterns) or *"The" Bride of Frankenstein* or *"The" Werewolf of London*, either of which could have been remedied by looking at a print. Some errors are introduced in the index (where the text correctly has *Chain Saw*, the index offers *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*), which has further problems in that it does not include many of the films and genre elements that are covered, however fleetingly, in the book. And to rise above the Gradgrind level, to speak not of facts but of critical insight and the appreciation of crucial works, I must add that I did not expect to learn much from an author who could drop in and out of both *White Zombie* and *I Walked With a Zombie* in half a sentence (on both pp. 101 and 166), or from a book that failed to include—to take obvious examples from both the high-art and schlock ends of the genre—important horror films from Dreyer's *Vampyr* to Lewis's *Blood Feast*. The latter may, of course, not have been released in England; nevertheless, it seems to me that Tudor's generalizations about the mad scientist, for one, would have been more comprehensive, accurate, and relevant to a study of that figure as a recurring element in the genre had he considered such possibly banned films as *Island of Lost Souls* (1932, US release 1933; he does the 1977 remake) and *The Maniac* (1934); ditto *Make Them Die Slowly* (1980) and the invasion narrative.

Taking the statistical tables with a good deal of compensation for transatlantic delay, it is interesting and useful to learn that the reliance on authorities for defense against the supernatural declined in 1975–84 relative to 1955–74, or that the "Types of pursuers in the horror movie, 1931–84" were "military" in 6% of the films, "scientists" in 11%, "experts" in 14%, "police" in 23%, and "everyperson" in 64% (which adds up to 118% because some films included more than one type of pursuer, just as *Dracula* teams up with expert Van Helsing with a group of amateurs).

Monsters and Mad Scientists is an occasionally brilliant book that reveals much about the horror film and about ways to study cultural history, even if the choice of films and culture is distinctly Anglo—you will not find *Kwaidan* here, although it was distributed in Britain—and even if it cannot be relied on as a reference book. If some of the movies that belong in however methodologically limited a history of the sound horror film are omitted here, or misread (so that some of their complexities, ambivalences, and ambiguities are overlooked), or put in what might strike the reader as the wrong category, or rushed over, it is still true that most of the movies discussed are treated intelligently and placed quite usefully in the context of the trends, developments, and secret concerns of popular culture, which themselves are, as Tudor demonstrates, particularly well illuminated by what people are afraid of, when and why they fear it, and what they hope they can do about it. BRUCE KAWIN

Elia Kazan: A Life

By Elia Kazan. New York: Knopf, 1988. $24.95

Despite the natural curiosity that might be expected from one who has spent more than two years studying the films and life of Kazan, it has taken me a long time to get around to reading this mammoth autobiography and even longer to write about it. Disappointed at not having deciphered the mystery of Kazan's character in my own book and discouraged by the alternately respectful and disdainful reviews when his long-awaited memoir first appeared, I thought I might ignore it completely. That would have been a big mistake. *Elia Kazan:*

A Life is an important, compelling testament, as indispensable a work of cultural history as it is an irresistible compendium of show-business gossip.

Kazan's life has followed several archetypal American patterns. First and perhaps most prominently, he has realized the immigrant's dream of success, starting out as a handyman in the Group Theatre and emerging in the late 1950s as one of the most powerful creative forces on both coasts, Hollywood and Broadway. Second and perhaps most notoriously, he has undergone the classic education of the Depression-bred liberal, passing from radicalism and membership in the Communist Party to become, through his friendly testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, a reviled symbol of betrayal and self-interest. Finally and perhaps most sadly, he has lived through the enormous triumphs of directing plays like *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, filming *On the Waterfront* and *East of Eden*, and writing *The Arrangement* to the relative obscurity that followed the failure of his term as director of Lincoln City Repertory, the generally poor reviews of his last films, and the critical indifference to his recent novels. As my personal introduction was intended to show, even his autobiography—a major achievement in the literary form—seems in danger of being ignored.

Kazan's autobiography reads something like a cross between *What Makes Sammy Run* and a novel by Theodore Dreiser. Its central character, like Schulberg's, can be an unprincipled opportunist corrupted by his own ambition ("The freedom to choose my next step is what I live by"). At the same time, he is, like Dreiser's Carrie, almost redeemed by his own resiliency and restless yearning ("Looking back, it seems to me that my outstanding trait was persistence in the face of rejection"). Running throughout the book is Kazan's insistence both that the ruthlessness is necessary for the fulfillment of ambition and that his quenchless desire to "have it all" is universal: "Have you tried getting through life without hurting anyone? . . . It can't be done."

Another comparison might be made with Ingmar Bergman's autobiography, *The Magic Lantern*. Both directors explain their marital unfaithfulness in part by reference to the sexually charged nature of the theater. They also share a fundamentally Romantic conception of the artist, extolling boundless personal freedom while seeking redemption in their own productions. The narratives of their lives follow an associational rather than strictly temporal chronology in keeping with this Romantic temperament. But Bergman's is a decidedly more poetic work, closer to Proust in its evocation of memory. Kazan, by contrast, works not from dream or metaphor but from scraps of evidence—diaries, letters, clippings, transcribed therapy sessions—piecing together his life as if it were an archeological dig. "Be careful what you write me!" he warns. "As you've noticed, I save everything."

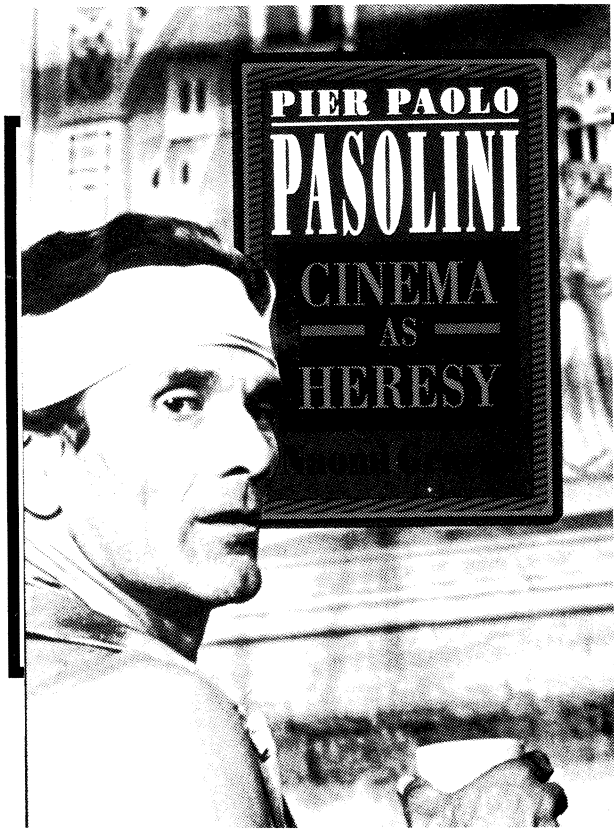
The information contained here tends to be exhaustive rather than surprising, an elaboration of the essential elements of Kazan's career and personality as documented in Michel Ciment's superb interview book, *Kazan on Kazan*. In fact, the single most important revelation may be the fact that Molly Kazan actually wrote the infamous statement defending his HUAC testimony that appeared as a paid advertisement in the *New York Times*. Readers hoping for either a definitive explanation or an abject apology for Kazan's action at this time will be disappointed—he continues to argue that, rather than being saved by his testimony, he became a "contractual cripple," damaged goods to the studios—but they may also be deeply moved by his evocation of the ambience of the aftermath, particularly his retelling of a painful confrontation with Zero Mostel in a New York bar and his touching reconciliation with Tony Kraber, one of the "names," years later following the death of Molly Kazan. The recollection of their exchange of brief letters causes Kazan to drop his guard for once, inspiring something like genuine remorse: "It had just been a game of power and influence, and I'd been taken in and twisted from my true self. I'd fallen for something I shouldn't have, no matter how hard the pressure and no matter how sound my reasons. The simple fact was that I wasn't political—not then, not now. I only wished that I could have been as generous and decent as Tony had been with me."

Kazan is characteristically more combative—his enemies will say self-serving, but what autobiography is not self-serving?—throughout the book, using the technique of direct address to implicate readers in his own misbehavior. While he periodically insists, "Reader, I do not seek your favor," his recurring insinuation, "You know what I'm talking about. You're not altogether different, are

you?'' appears a facile excuse. At the same time, however, he is hardly too easy on himself or unsparing in his appreciation of the creative contributions of his collaborators. And they are all here, in vividly detailed portraits: Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg, Clifford Odets, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Marilyn Monroe, Marlon Brando, James Dean, John Steinbeck, and Darryl Zanuck, along with a huge supporting cast. Often, as in this description of his friend and foil, Miller, Kazan tells us much about himself: ''He is not a clever man any more than I am, although he often stands as one. At his best he is true to what has happened to him. Out of experience came his good work, conceived in ambivalence and his own confusion and resolved in pity and a recognition of terror.''

The confessional aspect of the autobiography appears most prominently in Kazan's references to his numerous extramarital affairs. Not that he is apologetic: ''My 'womanizing' saved my life. It kept the juices pumping and saved me from drying up, turning to dust, and blowing away, like some of my friends.'' But he does acknowledge the painful effect his infidelities had on Molly, and he worries, understandably, about the effect his revelations may have on his children. While some readers may disagree, the motive behind this seemingly endless catalogue of sexual dalliances seems neither the urge to boast nor the need for catharsis but rather the effort to set down the truth, however unseemly. In the end, this is the effect of the entire book: like Charles Foster Kane, who also betrayed his friends for pride and power, Kazan is determined to prove at last that he is an honest man.

Whatever qualms we may experience about Kazan the man, Kazan the writer has succeeded in constructing a fascinating chronicle, one which can be read either as a linear narrative or in separate sections devoted to specific phases in the author's remarkable life. Interestingly, the story itself is abruptly cut short after the completion of *The Last Tycoon* (1976), Kazan's last film. ''This is as far as I'm going,'' the narrator reports, though what follows is one of the book's most powerful parts. The epilogue is comprised of several intimate portraits of friends facing death: Odets, Nicholas Ray, Clurman, Steinbeck, and most touchingly, Barbara Loden, Kazan's estranged second wife. Through



Naomi Greene

The major Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini was also a poet, novelist, essayist, and iconoclastic political commentator. Naomi Greene reveals to English-speaking readers the diverse talents that made him one of the most controversial European intellectuals of the postwar era, at the center of political and cultural debates. Greene presents Pasolini's films in full detail and in a rich critical context, using them to trace the evolution of his ideas and the details of his troubled personal life from 1950, when he settled in Rome, to 1975, the year of his brutal murder.

"I hate naturalness," wrote Pasolini of his filmmaking style. "I reconstruct everything." Probing the radical intelligence of his linguistic- cinematic theories, and the significance of his embrace of transgression and scandal, Greene relates his films—nearly all of which raise important cultural and political issues—not only to his life but to broader historical developments as well. Greene offers insights that will fascinate film specialists, Pasolini enthusiasts, and a wide audience of readers interested in European culture in general.

Cloth: $24.95 ISBN 0-691-03148-7

AT YOUR BOOKSTORE OR

Princeton University Press

41 WILLIAM ST. • PRINCETON, NJ 08540 • (609) 258-4900

ORDERS: 800-PRS-ISBN (777-4726)

these truly remarkable glimpses into his own mortality, Kazan struggles to come to terms with the ending of all autobiographies, what cannot be written except through indirection. "The thing is to persist, not back off," writes the seventy-eight-year-old in his conclusion. "Effort is all." And so we read recently of the eighty-year-old director trying to mount a new film in Turkey.

William Butler Yeats has said that out of our quarrel with others nothing better than rhetoric can emerge but that poetry springs from our quarrel with ourselves. If he is right, then Elia Kazan has produced in this memoir an enduring capstone to his life as an American artist.

LLOYD MICHAELS

Love and Other Infectious Diseases

A Memoir

By Molly Haskell. New York: William Morrow, 1990. $18.95

Molly Haskell's affecting memoir of the near-fatal illness of her husband, Andrew Sarris, is worth comment on for the human story at its center alone. Peripherally, and more relevant to this journal, there are some funny stories about Truffaut, Moreau, and lesser deities; more importantly there's some interesting documentation, in passing, on the early days of American auteurism, and its roots in New York's cinephile community of circa 1960, which Sarris himself is from, but not of. It is primarily, of course, for the book's human content that this book will be remembered—as medical miracle, feminist self-questioning, and touching love story. GREGG RICKMAN

A Note to Readers

If you enjoy reading *Film Quarterly* but don't see it on your library's shelves, let your periodicals order librarian know you'd appreciate finding it there. Librarians do try to be responsive to expressed needs of their patrons, and library circulation is ecologically as well as economically efficient —one copy gets read by many people.

Coming to Terms

The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film

By **SEYMOUR CHATMAN.** In *Coming to Terms,* the sequel to Chatman's classic *Story and Discourse* (Cornell, 1978), Chatman discusses a wide range of literary and cinematic texts, asserting that a general narratology can help to account for their commonalities and divergences. In an extended analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* he demonstrates what narratologists can learn from film adaptations of novels. $32.50 cloth, $10.95 paper

Stranded Objects

Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany

By **ERIC L. SANTNER.** "Santner draws on Mitscherlich, Adorno, Freud, Benjamin, and Derrida for what is clearly an original reading of the German postwar period generally and of individual thinkers and films in particular. This book places the much treated subject of 'coming to terms with the past' in a new and exciting philosophical context."—David Bathrick, Cornell University. $26.95

Cornell University Press

124 Roberts Place Ithaca, NY 14850

these truly remarkable glimpses into his own mortality, Kazan struggles to come to terms with the ending of all autobiographies, what cannot be written except through indirection. "The thing is to persist, not back off," writes the seventy-eight-year-old in his conclusion. "Effort is all." And so we read recently of the eighty-year-old director trying to mount a new film in Turkey.

William Butler Yeats has said that out of our quarrel with others nothing better than rhetoric can emerge but that poetry springs from our quarrel with ourselves. If he is right, then Elia Kazan has produced in this memoir an enduring capstone to his life as an American artist.

LLOYD MICHAELS

Love and Other Infectious Diseases

A Memoir

By Molly Haskell. New York: William Morrow, 1990. $18.95

Molly Haskell's affecting memoir of the near-fatal illness of her husband, Andrew Sarris, is worth comment on for the human story at its center alone. Peripherally, and more relevant to this journal, there are some funny stories about Truffaut, Moreau, and lesser deities; more importantly there's some interesting documentation, in passing, on the early days of American auteurism, and its roots in New York's cinephile community of circa 1960, which Sarris himself is from, but not of. It is primarily, of course, for the book's human content that this book will be remembered—as medical miracle, feminist self-questioning, and touching love story. GREGG RICKMAN

A Note to Readers

If you enjoy reading *Film Quarterly* but don't see it on your library's shelves, let your periodicals order librarian know you'd appreciate finding it there. Librarians do try to be responsive to expressed needs of their patrons, and library circulation is ecologically as well as economically efficient —one copy gets read by many people.

Coming to Terms

The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film

By **SEYMOUR CHATMAN.** In *Coming to Terms,* the sequel to Chatman's classic *Story and Discourse* (Cornell, 1978), Chatman discusses a wide range of literary and cinematic texts, asserting that a general narratology can help to account for their commonalities and divergences. In an extended analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* he demonstrates what narratologists can learn from film adaptations of novels. $32.50 cloth, $10.95 paper

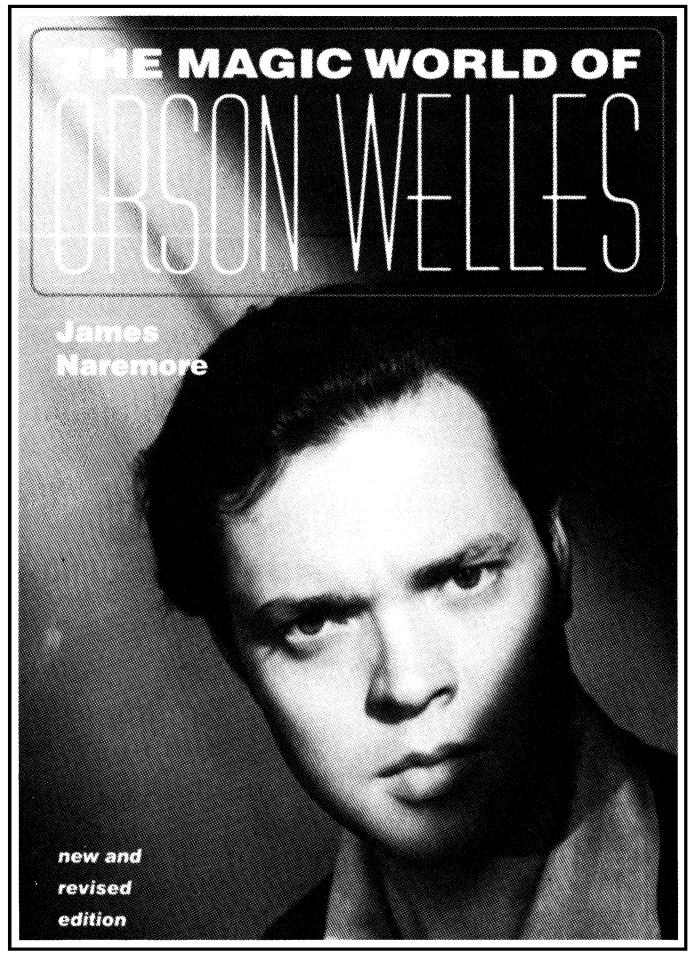
Stranded Objects

Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany

By **ERIC L. SANTNER.** "Santner draws on Mitscherlich, Adorno, Freud, Benjamin, and Derrida for what is clearly an original reading of the German postwar period generally and of individual thinkers and films in particular. This book places the much treated subject of 'coming to terms with the past' in a new and exciting philosophical context."—David Bathrick, Cornell University. $26.95

Cornell University Press

124 Roberts Place Ithaca, NY 14850



Prodigy, aesthete, rebel, actor, director and cinematic magician, Orson Welles is one of the most written about yet least understood figures of international cinema. This classic work, published in 1978 to great acclaim, is now available in a revised paperback edition which includes a new introduction and concluding chapter, and an expanded, updated filmography and bibliography. Using frame enlargements, Naremore uncovers the idiosyncratic qualities of the style that made Welles one of the most compelling artists in the medium. From *Citizen Kane* to *F for Fake,* Naremore places Welles' work in its historical context and reveals his films' political and psychological implications.

"With its wealth of background and close commentary, [this] is certainly the best study of Welles."

—Tag Gallagher,
Film Comment

320 pages. 93 b&w photos. $14.95 paper
At booksellers, or call toll-free 1-800-826-8911
Southern Methodist University Press
Drawer C, College Station, Texas 77843

New from CALIFORNIA in PAPERBACK

Acting in the Cinema

JAMES NAREMORE

Naremore focuses on the work of film acting, showing what players contribute to movies. Ranging from the earliest short subjects of Charles Chaplin to the contemporary features of Robert DeNiro, he develops a useful means of analyzing performance in the age of mechanical reproduction; at the same time, he reveals the ideological implications behind various approaches to acting, and suggests ways that behavior on the screen can be linked to the presentation of self in society.

"His comments are illuminating and passionately true."
—*Films in Review*

"A text on movie acting to be read with a handy VCR and cassettes stacked at your side. . . . Quite admirable detail."—*Kirkus Reviews*

$12.95 paper

King Vidor, American

RAYMOND DURGNAT and SCOTT SIMMON

"Durgnat and . . . Simmon have at last given Vidor the detailed and thoughtful attention he deserves. There is an excellent filmography, including discussions of whatever is known of the many early Vidor films that have been lost."—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"[Durgnat and Simmon] attempt to move beyond earlier, often fragmented investigations of Hollywood and explore the divergent themes in Vidor's career as part of an integrated whole. Drawing on unpublished diaries, oral interviews, and Vidor's own writings, they present a convincing case that the director built an enormously successful career by projecting onto the screen the central dilemmas of his own experience."
—*San Francisco Review of Books*

$12.95 paper

At bookstores or order toll-free
1-800-822-6657. Visa & MasterCard only.

University of California Press
Berkeley 94720